



THE  
ESSENTIAL  
THING



ARTHUR HODGES



Mrs Edmund Andrews



**THE ESSENTIAL THING**







DORIS

# The Essential Thing

By  
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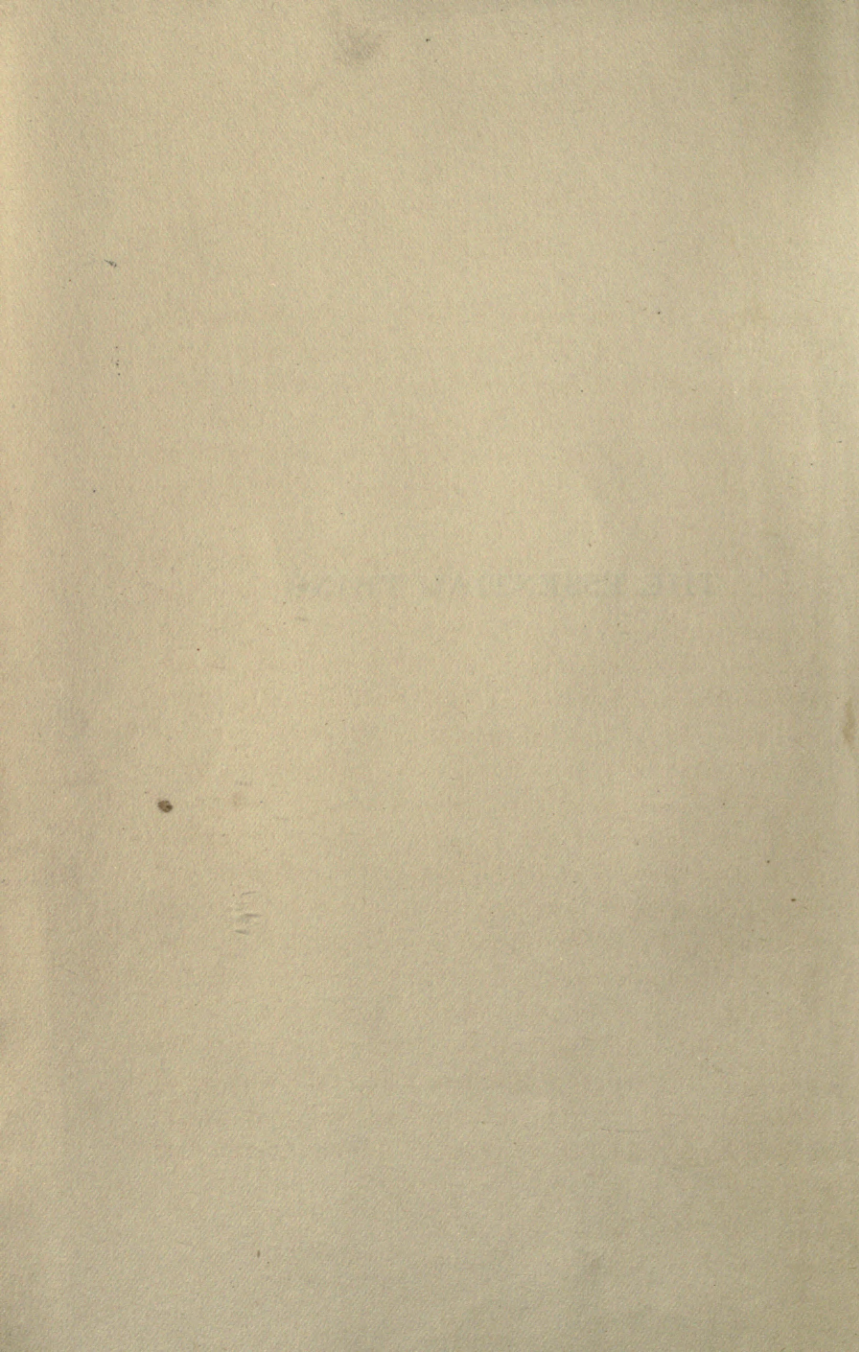
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To  
M. L. S.

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**THE ESSENTIAL THING**



## CHAPTER I

GOEFFREY HUNTER awoke in his flat in the Kenworthy Chambers just off Fifth Avenue, feeling very, very wretched. As had happened more than once of late, he had drunk too much the night before. Glancing for his watch and not seeing it on the small table at the side of the bed, he lay still for a minute, trying to determine the time.

His bedroom was a large square apartment with two windows looking west and the bed in which he now began to move restlessly was of mahogany with four slender columns. A lambrequin of old red velvet, such as one sees in Italian churches at high festivals, hung from its cornice and at each corner were suspended curtains of red damask. An air of rich confusion reigned. The walls were hung with damask and his bedspread had been fashioned out of some antique vestments. A chest of drawers of Dutch marquetry, grandiose and impressive with its swelling front, stood between the windows, and a mirror placed in an ancient Florentine frame of gilded wood and hanging above it reflected a quantity of silver toilet articles with which its top was littered. A sofa, deep and luxurious, occupied the wall opposite the chest of drawers, and between the bed and the fireplace were arranged several easy chairs and a large table on which were piled a quantity of

novels and reviews in English, Italian and French. Some Scutari rugs were piled in a corner, a large tapestry carelessly folded occupied one end of the sofa and a renaissance crucifix in carved wood six feet long, which had been sent in by some dealer for his inspection, rested across the arms of one of the chairs. In addition the room was disordered by various articles of clothing strewn about the floor: a dress coat, a white waistcoat, a pair of pumps kicked off unceremoniously, his watch, and a badly ruffled silk hat.

Goeffrey turned his head. In his sitting-room at the right, he could see a fire burning cheerfully in the grate, and from somewhere close at hand came the sound of running water. Presently this sound ceased and a door opened and softly closed.

"Waters!" Goeffrey called.

A stout, smooth-faced man appeared from the sitting-room.

"What, sir?" he asked in an obsequious manner. The simple vulgarity of this phrase which Waters always used in answering him, often amused Goeffrey, but this morning he felt irritated by it.

"What time is it?" he replied shortly.

"Eleven o'clock, sir," Waters answered, and seeing the battered hat which lay almost at his feet, he picked it up and began to brush and straighten it dexterously.

"Mr. Pandolfi stopped in, sir," he continued; he placed the hat in a clothes closet at one end of the sofa, moving with great softness and agility, and emerged

bringing with him a pair of trees which he inserted in the pumps.

"He called to ask you something about the supper next Thursday, sir, and —"

"Never mind that now, Waters," interrupted Goeffrey, who was turning impatiently in bed.

"Yes, sir."

Waters, who had been breathing on the pumps and rubbing them briskly on his coat sleeve, put them hastily down and seizing the evening coat, ran to the bureau and returning with a clothes brush began to brush it vigorously. Suddenly he stopped and said earnestly:

"Mr. Goeffrey."

"What is it?" Goeffrey answered irritably.

"Don't you think the red silk tablecloth will be the one to use, sir?"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"About the supper, sir — we haven't used it for some time, and if we had yellow tulips to go with it, the effect would be most pleasing. I mentioned it to Mr. Pandolfi, sir, and he thought it an excellent idea, only he suggested that we have mixed in with the tulips, some —"

"Please, Waters," Goeffrey again interrupted, "never mind about that now; wait until I am better and then we can talk about it."

"Yes, sir, I'm sorry, sir," answered Waters, his face falling.

The coat and waistcoat had been carefully folded

and put away, and Waters picking up the watch, attacked the trousers, the overcoat and the shirt, from which the buttons must be removed. Standing by the chest of drawers, deftly inserting the sleeve links into a fresh one, which he had taken from them, he paused and said quickly:

"Mr. Goeffrey! Miss Adair called you on the telephone last night, to say that you were not to forget that she is to come here for luncheon to-day and that you are going to the matinee afterwards."

"Waters!" Goeffrey sat up in the bed and spoke sternly. "I want you to pull the shades down and then to go at once, do you hear?"

"Oh! yes, sir," Waters answered hastily, and dropping the shirt he ran to the windows; he could not resist, however, while passing the table, picking up some of the magazines and leaving them in a neat pile.

Returning, he noticed for the first time, Goeffrey's undershirt lying on the bed and stooping over to pick it up, he said:

"Shall I get you some breakfast, sir?"

Goeffrey seized the shirt and tore it from his hands. "Good God! Waters, please, please go away," he fairly shouted, and Waters disappeared into the sitting-room shutting the door after him.

Yes, Goeffrey was feeling very, very wretched: his head ached with a dull pounding throb, sharp pains which seemed to lurk behind his eyeballs, tortured him, and at times something like a chill swept through him. After lying for some time with closed eyes, hoping that

the feeling of general *malaise* which oppressed him would pass away, he got up, went into the bathroom and swallowed a dose of some nostrum which had been recommended to him as being efficacious in such cases, getting into bed again quickly, but after waiting for a quarter of an hour and still feeling no better, he got up again, determined to try his bath which Waters had prepared for him, hoping that the cold plunge would prove beneficial. Instead of the agreeable shock he usually experienced, the water seemed cruelly cold, and jumping out quickly, with chattering teeth, he began to rub desperately, but growing colder each moment, he hurried into bed again with a groan, muttering:

“Good God! what retribution.”

Finally, getting up for the third time, he dressed hurriedly, tossed on an overcoat, seized a hat and went out.

## CHAPTER II

GOEFFREY had been born in one of two old mansions which stood together in Waverly Place. The other was occupied when they were in town, which was seldom, by his cousin Richard and Richard's mother, Mrs. Whitely, who was his father's sister. He had never known his own mother, because her life had been the price paid for his birth, and for many years he rarely saw his father, a sad, taciturn man who came back only at long intervals from Europe, where he had gone after the death of his wife to whom he had been passionately attached. Both Mr. Hunter and his sister had, through long residence abroad, become thorough Europeans. From time to time as the exigencies of business connected with their properties demanded, they made hurried journeys to New York, but these had become less and less frequent, their friends seeing them so rarely, that at length they were almost forgotten and no one came any more to the houses in Waverly Place.

So Goeffrey grew up a very quiet and lonely little boy, knowing hardly anyone except Mrs. Wickes, the English housekeeper, and two old servants. Every year about the first of June, when the trees in Washington Square, bursting suddenly into leafage, warned them that summer was at hand, the *ménage* was moved

to a small place on the Hudson owned by Mr. Hunter; returning to town again in October. In the city, as in the country too, one day was very like another to Goeffrey, who spent his time trundling his hoop in the square on fine days, taking long aimless walks up Fifth Avenue with Mrs. Wickes, or when the weather was stormy, roaming about the old mansion. The whole house was his playground with the exception of the rooms on the second floor in which his mother had lived and died and which were only opened when Mr. Hunter occupied them.

Goeffrey knew that there were such things as mothers because his cousin Richard had one, and although he had only seen her once or twice that he could remember, he thought her very nice; but what his own was like or where she had gone, he had no clear conception.

When Goeffrey was seven, his father, who had been away for two years, wrote that he was coming back and that Mrs. Whitely and Richard were with him. Goeffrey was glad to hear this, because there had been developing in his childish mind a feeling that all was not as it should be with him. Mrs. Wickes, growing old, stout and self-indulgent, left him more and more to himself and he was dimly conscious that there was something lacking in his life, something which he wanted very much, but which it was impossible for him to express. He had a father, he wished that he could be with him. He had almost forgotten that he had been quite afraid of his father, who was very stern with him if he made the least noise; and when he thought

of him, as he did very often, he only remembered him as a tall man with a fine dark beard, of whom he had been very proud. Richard and his mother were always with him in this place called Europe which seemed so far away — why could he not go there too? He felt that if he could ask his father if he could go back with him, perhaps things would be better for him. He could not tell just how, but perhaps it would be different there. They were going back very soon the letter had said. At least he must ask. So when Mr. Hunter at last arrived, had shaken hands with Mrs. Wickes, greeted the other servants and deposited his hand luggage in the hall, he saw a pale little boy with dark hair and wistful eyes smiling at him nervously, his hands claspings and unclasping. If he was aware that he had neglected his son, whatever sense of failure he may have felt that he was guilty of toward him, or whatever resolve he may have made to atone to him for it, was swept away by a rush of painful memories. His habitual feeling of indifference changed swiftly to one almost of hostility, owing to an obstinate and cruel resentment toward Goeffrey as being the cause of his wife's death. With a bare word of recognition, a coldly indifferent question or two, he turned toward the stairs. A black cloud of disappointment settled about Goeffrey's heart, his old feeling of fear had come back again, but summoning all his courage, he said in his quiet child's voice:

“Father, may I go back with you?”

Mr. Hunter turned. “Where,” he asked shortly.

"To Europe."

"Oh, no," his father answered, "you are much too young."

"But Richard goes, father."

"I have nothing to do with Richard. Richard has a mother."

As Goeffrey walked with turned up collar, shivering miserably in the raw air, these first memories of his childhood came somehow very vividly before him.

Others followed.

He had crept to his room and thrown himself on his bed in a passion of tears. He had realized at last, as fully as it is possible for a child, that he was lonely. He felt quite alone and friendless. It seemed as if he had been condemned to live on forever in this house with these old servants, without anything to make him happy, with no one to love or to be loved by.

Night came. The little bell which always called him to tea, sounded faintly through his closed door. As he went down the stairs, his attention was attracted by a bright light shining through the open doorway of one of the rooms on the second floor; one of those rooms which had always been closed to him. Reaching the landing he saw hanging over the fireplace against the opposite wall of this room a large portrait of a woman. A reflector fixed above shed a strong light upon it, and forgetting that he was entering forbidden territory, he stepped softly in, looking at the picture with ab-

sorbed attention as if drawn to it by some inexplicable attraction.

He had never seen anyone so beautiful before. She was sitting down, dressed in some greenish stuff, with a cloak of fur partly covering her bare neck and arms. One elbow rested on an arm of her chair and she was leaning forward as if looking at someone. Suddenly he realized that she was looking at him, looking at him with an expression so wonderfully kind and tender, that her gaze seemed to go straight into his heart, making it throb so quickly that he pressed his hands to it unconsciously. Something radiant, something beatific seemed to envelop him and with his whole soul he looked back at her. Oh, that he might put his arms about her neck, rest his cheek against hers and be comforted. He stood quite motionless, he did not know how long, until a slight sound startled him and turning he saw his father seated at a table watching him with his old hostile look.

"Is that mother, father?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Where is she, father?"

Mr. Hunter hesitated for a moment. "She has gone away," he said at last, "and you must not ask questions; go to your tea at once, the bell rang long ago."

He remembered that he would have liked so much to ask his father where she had gone and when she was coming back, but he was afraid and went quickly out of the room. But he felt very happy now that

he had seen her. How beautiful and kind she looked. He must find out somehow where she was, so that he could send her a message, asking her please, please to come back. He must not ask questions, his father had said, but still he felt sure that somehow he would find her.

That night he dreamed a dream which was both sad and sweet; he thought that as he lay in bed his mother came and sat beside him, leaning forward in her chair with the same tender, half smiling look, and climbing quickly up to her, they clung together, oh, so closely and wept together; he knew not why, but in the delicious agony of their mingling tears, he felt ineffable happiness.

He is in the room of the portrait again; his father is not there but he is standing before it with Mrs. Whitely and Richard.

"That is my mother," he is saying proudly; "she has gone away, but I am going to ask her to come back."

Richard, a little blond boy about his own age, who speaks with a strong French accent, is looking at him in amazement.

"Your mother!" he exclaims, "why, she's — what do you call it in English? Oh, yes, dead! She's dead. Didn't you know?"

"Dead!" he asks, "what's that?"

"I don't know exactly," answered Richard, "but when my father died, they took him in a long black box to

Père Lachaise and put him in the ground. I've been there many times with my *bonne*."

"Richard," cries Mrs. Whitely, horrified. But Goeffrey in one of those flashes of intuition by which, without previous experience, the mind comprehends, understands that he has found her only to lose her again forever.

That night he dreamed another dream. She came to him as she had come before, but after they had clung together in that dear embrace, she put him in his bed and kissing him said gently, "Good-by my Goeffrey." Long he watched her with outstretched arms until he saw her from afar, turn and say again, "Good-by," and answering between his sobs, he too called "Good-by, Good-by," and waked to find his face still wet.

Often after this his dream came to him, and always the same, always that dear embrace, that parting kiss, that poignant good-by always so full of anguish and yet so appealing, so tender, that his last thought at night was, the wish that it might come again.

He remembered how Mrs. Whitely, touched by his obvious loneliness and neglect, had pleaded so vigorously with his father, that she had finally persuaded him and he had found himself suddenly transported into a strange world amidst unaccustomed surroundings.

He remembered his early life abroad, confused impressions of endless changing from place to place; of long, very long and tiresome journeys, of sojourns in hotels and villas, of introductions into strange schools

where unknown tongues were spoken which in some mysterious way became suddenly familiar to him. He remembered how Richard finally went away to enter a school in England and how much he had missed him. He remembered well the little villa on the Italian Riviera which his father had purchased, and to which he went to find relief from a bronchial affection, taking Goeffrey with him, where at last a faint light of understanding began to grow up between them. To Goeffrey when they were finally settled there it seemed to him as if he had come home at last after his years of school and other years of wandering, and he grew to love that old country with its olive groves on their narrow terraces, its rocky promontories, its ruined watch towers, its pagan temples, its deserted convents, the cascades and the sea. But above all he loved the mountains, sitting afar off he used to think, like old, old giants.

And as he thought of his youth there, his memory glowed as he had seen the sea glow under the bows of the fishermen's boats as they moved slowly in to shore, casting ripples of phosphorescent light upon the beach. He remembered his years of study in Paris and his last visit to Italy to see his father. A recollection full of sorrow because they had come to love each other.

They were seated after dinner one night on the little terrace in front of the house, from which a view of the sea could be had, spread out far below them. Their desultory conversation had lapsed for a moment, when Mr. Hunter laid a hand on his son's shoulder.

"Goeffrey," he said, "I want to speak to you about your future."

Goeffrey looked up quickly. He had thought, upon reaching the villa, that his father had looked quite ill, but as the days passed and he had seen nothing specific to indicate a change for the worse, his momentary apprehension had passed away. Now it returned; his father sat beside him wrapped in a shawl, but his face under his beard seemed emaciated, he looked very old and tired. Goeffrey felt certain now that his cough was more obstinate than it had been the last time he had seen him.

Mr. Hunter apparently read his thoughts, for he made a reassuring gesture.

"It isn't that, Goeffrey," he said, "I am as well as usual, but the time will come some day when I shall be gone and one must discuss these things sooner or later. What I wanted to say was, that you have never had any experience in business affairs; money is very hard to get and very easy to lose, and although I shall leave you everything I have, I shall place it in trust, so that you will have only the income of it. Would you object to that?"

"Do what you think best of course, father," answered Goeffrey.

Mr. Hunter smiled at the boyish inconsequence of his answer.

"I am very glad," he answered, "that you have no objections to my plan; you will be very well off, Goeffrey, about thirty thousand dollars a year I should think; not a large fortune as fortunes go in these days,

but enough to live on, and even to marry, as I hope you will sometime; but, Goeffrey, there is one thing I am going to ask you to promise me to do, even if I should happen not to be here to remind you of it. Mr. Davidge (whom you will remember to have met in Paris) will administer my estate, and I believe that he will prove to be a very honest and careful custodian; still one cannot foresee the future, and I want you to promise me that when you finish your studies, you will go to your own country and for a time, at least, practice your profession. It is wrong to leave one's country as we have done. You may find that your education here and the traditions you have absorbed may make life there difficult for you, but promise me that you will try; practice your profession there for three years and if nothing comes of it, you will have gained practical experience which may prove to be invaluable to you later. Will you promise?"

"Yes, father, of course, but are you quite sure that everything is all right?" Goeffrey was looking at him anxiously.

"Oh, yes, thank you, I am as well as usual, but as I said, one must talk of these matters sooner or later, and now," he continued, getting up, "it is my bed time, and as you will be leaving very early, I shall not see you in the morning. Good-by and good luck, and I hope you will be down very soon again. Good-by."

"Good-by, father," Goeffrey answered, filled with a premonition of approaching evil.

Mr. Hunter turned toward the house, but before

reaching the door, he stopped and came back to Geoffrey's side.

"Goeffrey," he said, "when you were a little boy, I was very unjust and cruel to you. Will you forgive me?"

"But father, of course, I think I —"

"It was because *she* died bringing you into the world; what she was to me, what she did for me, cursed with my temperament, no one can know. Even now, old man that I am, I cannot, I cannot — but you never saw her; you could not know what her loss was to me —"

Goeffrey hesitated a moment for fear of giving pain. "Do you remember the night," he said at last, "when I first saw her portrait, when I came into your room and looked at it for a long time and asked you if it were my mother and where she had gone? That night when I was asleep, she came and sat beside me, that night and many nights after for years."

His father grasped his hand and Goeffrey felt that it trembled.

"Does she come now?"

"Not for many years, father," answered Goeffrey.

"Ah! you have forgotten her," his father said mournfully. "We all forget! She promised to come to *me* but she never came. But *she* did not forget, it was I who forgot, forgot my duty toward you. She was a good, an angelic woman, Goeffrey, and if you can live so as to be worthy of her praise, you will have done well."

He remembered how, a week later, he was at his

father's house again, having gone with all speed from Paris, in answer to a telegram saying that Mr. Hunter had had a severe hemorrhage, only to find that he was too late. He had reached there very late at night, and toward morning he stole from the house and climbing a steep path, seated himself in a little pavilion which surmounted a hill overlooking the villa and the sea.

He wanted to be alone and think of his loneliness. In the wandering life that he had led no lasting friendships had been formed, and now that his father was gone, he had no one. Mrs. Whitely had died some years before, and Richard had drifted into other occupations and surroundings. He felt as one sometimes feels after a period of great happiness has passed, that there is nothing left. The future at that moment seemed as empty as did the material world lying silent under the pale dawn kindling slowly in the east, under the vast expanse of the sky, sprinkled with stars already fading from sight. And as he turned toward the mountains, the mountains he had always loved, lying somnolent in the growing light, it seemed to him that they welcomed this silence, longed for it always, were waiting with the prescience of immense age for the time when nature, which always conquers man, shall have destroyed him utterly, so that they could rest forever in undisturbed tranquillity.

Goeffrey, that morning, thought again of all these things. Of his uselessness, of his mother of whom he had not been worthy, of that powerful emotion of soli-

tude which had possessed him, seated in the pavilion at dawn in Italy, which at intervals still possessed him, and which comforted him because of the hope that at last it might draw him from his idle life, to one of use to himself and others.

He had been walking through a side street and at last, for no definite reason, turned up one of the more remote avenues, which, formerly an old residential district, was being rapidly invaded by business. Through the swirls of dust raised by the cold east wind, the orange colored electric cars rushed past upon their steel grooves, with a roaring sound. Huge buildings reared their cornices aloft at intervals, and between, groups of old houses, dirty and uncared for, stood with an air of sadness and dejection, like old people who have lived beyond their allotted time, beyond the ties of kindred and friendship, beyond their own, into an alien generation. And to Goeffrey looking at them, they seemed typical of what his own life would become, and he felt that he must do something, take some step, so that it would be less empty. He longed to lay his head upon the tender bosom of a woman as he had done with his mother in his dream. The thought which had come to him many times of late returned. Yes, he must marry.

His pity for his own situation was so great, that tears came to his eyes. He drew a cigar from his pocket, but the odor was so distasteful that he dashed it angrily to the ground. Suddenly a vertigo seized him and he clung to a railing, his head whirling. What

was the matter? Could it be that he needed food? He remembered now that the carouse of the night before had begun upon his meeting some friends late in the afternoon and in consequence, he had not dined at all.

It had been twenty-four hours since he had eaten anything. Yes, that was it. He was famishing.

He looked at his watch, it was twelve o'clock. Doris Adair was to be there at half past. He had barely time to get back to his rooms.

### CHAPTER III

ON going one night, soon after he had first met Ernesto Pandolfi, into a restaurant which for the moment was the popular rendezvous for after-theater suppers, Goefrey had encountered him with a very gay party which he had been asked to join.

Although he knew the other women present — all actresses — he had never seen until then, the one who happened to be seated at his left. She was a blonde, of about middle height; — the corsage of her elegant dress was well filled; — she had fine shoulders and a beautiful but sullen face. Sullen rather through some habitual condition of mind, some preying thought perhaps, than from the natural expression of her features which Goeffrey thought might easily have been very sweet.

Her quiet almost suppressed manner was in sharp contrast to the rather forced vivacity of the other women, a vivacity which they seemed to consider obligatory, and when she spoke, her accent was an English one with a slight additional trace of something which puzzled him and at the first opportunity he had said to her:

“Surely, you are not an English woman.”

“My mother was French, but my name is a very English one — Doris Adair.”

"But you have a slight foreign accent which I can't place. I thought I knew most of them."

She did not care apparently to satisfy his curiosity and made no response. She seemed in fact at first to be generally unresponsive, although not unfriendly, but as the evening wore on and from time to time they fell, as the opportunity offered, into snatches of desultory conversation, she revealed to him a surprisingly educated point of view, and Goeffrey became pleasingly conscious of the harmonious flow between them of that subtle fluid called sympathy.

As they were getting up to go, he had found her so attractive, with her air of cold indifference, her beautiful but sullen face and her unmistakable intelligence, that he said to her:

"May I come to see you sometime?"

She stared at him stonily. "You may not," she answered abruptly, and turned her back on him.

Her rudeness covered him with confusion for a moment, and he remembered afterwards that he had seen Pandolfi looking at them with an amused smile, but a little later as they were waiting for the motors and he found himself standing beside her, she had said hurriedly to him:

"Forgive me, for being rude. I only have a little box of a place and never ask anyone there. Where do *you* live?"

"At the Kenworthy," Goeffrey answered.

She looked about her quickly before speaking again, and then still hurriedly, she said:

“Would you like me to come and see *you* on Sunday night?”

Goeffrey's pleasure at this proposal enabled him to conceal his astonishment.

“I should be delighted,” he answered; “when may I expect you?” But at that moment Pandolfi came up to them, and without answering, she got into a motor which had just stopped at the curb.

During the days which ensued before the arrival of Sunday, Goeffrey, an idler, thought often of this adventure and speculated as to her reason for making the proposal she had. An opportunity offering itself, he had asked about her, but little was known except that it was said that she had been born of a French mother and an English father, and had lived most of her life in England. That she was an actress and was playing minor parts at one of the more important theaters.

He went one night to see her and was disappointed. Her few lines were spoken with an enunciation which was a delight to listen to, but he felt sure that she had not the makings of an actress. She lacked the peculiar temperament, and while he was disappointed, he was pleased too; he could not have told why. He was surprised at the interest she had aroused in him, and as evidence of it, it occurred to him when he got home that he had intended that night to go to Mrs. Aladine's, because he knew that Miss Nina Davidge was to be there. He had forgotten about it completely.

On Sunday night at nine, after Goeffrey had almost

given up hope, Waters, who had been told that she was expected, opened the door of Goeffrey's parlor and she came in. He noticed the richness and finish of her clothing, as he was helping her off with her wraps, but he was not especially observant, because he was not curious, and if he had thought at all about it, he would probably have explained it to himself by saying that actresses seemed to know how to do that sort of thing, get the right effects, with much less money than other women.

At first she stood quite still looking at Goeffrey's really fine room. "How beautiful," she said, "how beautiful," and he was flattered to find that she understood at once that only a very fastidious and discriminating taste could have brought his collection together. His furniture, his porcelains and his silver.

"I haven't very much, compared with some people," he explained, "but what there is of it, is unusually fine I think."

Their conversation was quite impersonal, but Goeffrey, happening to say something which caused her to laugh, he was so pleased with the change it made in her expression, the curve it gave to her lips and the glimpse it afforded of her perfect teeth, that he was spurred to renewed efforts. She did not seem, however, to expect him to make any special conversational exertion for her, nor did she talk very much herself; there were times when they were silent together, but that subtle bond of sympathy which had developed almost from the first between them, made these silences

possible, and not only possible but pleasant. To Geoffrey it almost seemed as if she had come there to rest, to get away from something which fatigued and depressed her.

This meeting was the first of many. She would come to see him almost always in the afternoon. Sometimes telephoning to find out whether he would be in or not, and sometimes in response to notes which he would send to her at the theater. She never told him where she lived.

A deep and sympathetic friendship developed between them, but that it remained that, was due to her. Geoffrey noticed that her intense repression of manner, at times almost painful to a man of his temperament, began to disappear. She became more responsive. When she was with him, her face lost its sullen expression; she talked and laughed freely with a spontaneity which was delightful to him; but once or twice, when under the influence of her physical beauty, his manner had taken on a tenderer, a less impersonal tone, she had changed at once; had shrunk back into her old attitude of silence and reserve.

When Geoffrey reached home after his walk, he found a small table already laid, standing near the fireplace with a large chair at either side of it. Doris was sitting on the arm of one of them leaning slightly forward and looking out of the window. From the white gloved hand, which hung limply over its back, to her large, black hat and the tip of her suede slipper, above which

a slender ankle encased in a stocking of thinnest silk could be seen, she was dressed to perfection, with a slight something of daring which was never absent from her and with which she seemed to invest the most conventional forms of dress.

For one instant before she jumped to her feet upon hearing him, Goeffrey caught in her attitude, in her expression, in the droop of her full white neck, a sense of dejection, of languor, as if in this moment of solitude she had given herself up to the contemplation of that thought, of that burden the consciousness of which was never far beneath the surface and which so often depressed and wearied her. He had surprised her in this mood more than once, and had always wondered what it meant, but she so evidently wished to conceal it, that he had never spoken of it.

"Why, Goeffrey!" she exclaimed, looking at him closely. "What is the matter? You look ill, have you been drinking again?"

"A little," answered Goeffrey, rather shamefacedly.

"Oh, you foolish, foolish boy. Was Ernesto with you? Goeffrey, what is it?"

For Goeffrey's vertigo had returned and he had dropped into one of the chairs looking quite white. Through the faintness which overcame him, the result mainly of exhaustion, it seemed to him that Doris looked at him quite wildly for a moment and then seizing one of his hands kissed it passionately. The touch of those soft lips thrilled and revived him. He tried to smile reassuringly.

"Yes," Goeffrey answered, looking up in surprise. "He is the trustee of my property. Why?"

"Well, Mr. Davidge and Ernesto are together constantly."

"Are they? I didn't know that."

"Is there any way that Ernesto could harm you, Goeffrey? In money matters, I mean."

"I can't see how, I only have an income, what do you mean?"

"I don't know, but I am worried."

"My dear little Doris," cried Goeffrey, "don't worry your head about me. I won't see him so much if you don't want me to, but don't say that you won't come here any more, please — and now," he went on, as Waters brought in a tray containing a silver coffee service and two cups of thin porcelain, "cigarettes, Waters, and that will be all."

And Doris, rousing herself, began to put on her armor; she was to be alone with man, her eternal enemy. She had been weak before him and that was dangerous.

"Do you know what I have been thinking of to-day?" began Goeffrey. "Of Italy and the mountains. I lived there when I was a boy, in the very shadow of the mountains — I loved them and yet they always oppressed me somehow. Now I long to see them again — they always seemed to me like immensely old giants, very old and tired."

Doris made a gesture toward the window.

"*They* always remind me of giants," she replied. "The buildings, of bad giants. Their hundreds of win-

dows look like expressionless eyes through which they see everything. They quite frighten me."

Goeffrey leaning back luxuriously in his chair, looked at the buildings. From where he sat, his apartment occupied the fourteenth floor, he could see the whole of the lower part of the city — that gigantic agglomeration of steel and stone with which the earth is burdened. They stretched on every side, in every direction, story piled on story, endless adaptations of old forms to new conditions. A waste — massive, overpowering, but without relationship, without plan. And it seemed to him that this very lack of harmony, this absence of cohesion, gave their immense proportions, their towering cornices, devoid of charm, devoid of fancy, an expression as of something hard, proud, scornful and insolent — an unconscious revelation of the ferocious individualism which had created them. Yes, in this immensity of effort spread before him, under the leaden sky — there was something hostile and forbidding, but at the same time something somber, something sad.

"Do you see what I mean, Goeffrey?" Doris went on. "In old countries, one sees buildings that have personalities which charm one, some mournful, some gay, some poetical, but here they seem just hostile, like an army of hostile giants, always looking balefully out of their thousand eyes, not wishing to be what they are and always thinking with resentment, with hatred, of the people who have brought them into being."

Goeffrey laughed. "What an extraordinary idea! But my giants weren't like that, they were just awfully

"Yes," Goeffrey answered, looking up in surprise.

"He is the trustee of my property. Why?"

"Well, Mr. Davidge and Ernesto are together constantly."

"Are they? I didn't know that."

"Is there any way that Ernesto could harm you, Goeffrey? In money matters, I mean."

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Goeffrey laughed. "What an extraordinary idea! But my giants weren't like that, they were just awfully

old — and tired. Have you ever been to Italy, Doris? ”

“ No, but I have been to France — and oh! Goeffrey, I do love it. Each time, when I first see the little French houses and the little French soldiers, I cry, I love it so.”

“ And I love Italy — and when I finish practicing my profession, I am going back.”

“ Practicing your profession!” Doris looked at him with open eyes and then broke into a clear ringing laugh. “ Practicing your profession, why, Goeffrey, what profession have you? ”

“ I’m an architect, didn’t you know? ” Goeffrey answered with a serious air. “ I promised my father that when he died, I would come over here and go into business for three years at least.”

Doris leaned toward him. “ Forgive me, Goeffrey, I didn’t know. And did you practice it? ”

“ I tried,” answered Goeffrey, “ but I didn’t get any commissions.”

“ And why not? ”

“ I don’t know, because it wasn’t necessary perhaps,— I suppose if one *has* to get commissions, one gets them, but I didn’t have to and so, I shall go back soon. I don’t like it here and I don’t believe that I shall ever come over again. But I don’t want to go alone ”— he reached across the table and took her hand, Doris letting it lie passively and sitting with averted face, her long lashes resting on her cheeks — he drew it toward him and kissed it as she had done his.

“ Why did you do that, Doris? ”

She did not answer.

"Doris, will you come with me as my little companion to France, to Italy, care free, wherever we like?"

Still she did not answer and Goeffrey, kissing her hand again, repeated:

"Why did you do it, Doris?"

"Do what, Goeffrey?" she answered almost inaudibly.

"You know, why did you?"

Doris drew a breath that was almost a sob.

"I didn't!" she exclaimed, snatching her hand away and turning quickly toward him, "and if I did, it was because I was frightened, and — oh, Goeffrey, just let's be friends, I have been so happy in our friendship, don't try to change it."

"But isn't love better?" he asked.

"Love," she repeated scornfully, "it's worse, a thousand times worse. I hate the very sound of the word and I hate you when you talk of it. You are like all the rest then —"

"Like all the rest. Oh, Doris, how can you say so."

"Very well, suppose I go with you, what then?"

"What then? We are so companionable, would there ever have been such a pilgrimage as we would make together. Stopping where we like. Idling through Europe — which we both love."

"And what then?"

"Who would give a thought to the future, living like that?"

"Sometime we would think of the future, and what then?"

Goeffrey did not answer.

"What then, Goeffrey? You don't answer because you can't. And you say that you are not like the rest and I thought that you were my friend. Oh, Goeffrey," she went on, "you don't know what you have done, how you have hurt me, destroyed something in me, by saying what you have."

Suddenly the telephone bell, which was close to Doris, began its long insistent ring, causing her to start, and Goeffrey, glad of the interruption, sprang to answer it.

"Is Mr. Hunter there?" a voice called. "Is this Mr. Hunter? Your cousin, Mr. Richard Whitely, is downstairs and wishes to know if he may come up, sir."

"Of course, send him up at once," answered Goeffrey, replacing the receiver. "Was there ever such luck," he exclaimed. "My cousin is here from Europe. I haven't seen him for years. That means that we can't go, Doris. I'm so sorry. But take the tickets, you can go at least."

"No, thanks," Doris answered shortly, getting up and beginning to gather together a woman's impedimenta.

"Please, Doris, are you angry?"

"I shan't," she cried, stamping her foot. "I have never taken anything from you, and I never shall. Good-by, Goeffrey." She held out her hand with averted face and turning, went through a small study at the right of the sitting-room, by which access could be had to a flight of narrow stairs. She had done

this more than once when they had been interrupted. By descending a flight, she could return to the main corridor and take the elevator down.

"I'm so sorry, Doris. Will you never come again?"

"Never, Goeffrey. I intended not to come again anyway. I should never have come in the first place —"

"But I swear, Doris, I swear."

"It's no use, Goeffrey, I shan't come."

"But, Doris, I *am* your friend; it *has* been good to have you here. And you will come again if others are here, won't you? You'll come to my party?"

Doris hesitated. "Yes, I will come because I promised you to. Good-by."

"Doris!"

"Good-by," she repeated.

"Good-by, Doris; I'm sorry."

He watched her as she went down the stairs and caught again that sense of depression, of fatigue, as of a person carrying a burden hard to bear, and he flushed with shame as he realized how brutally he had destroyed in one moment, shriveled up, that candid and sincere friendship which had grown up between them. He knew that her obvious honesty and self respect should have prevented any possible misconstruction on his part, but he had promptly attempted to take advantage of an act on hers, which (whatever it meant) was quite as spontaneous, quite as honest as her whole conduct had been toward him from the beginning.

"Yes," he thought. "I have acted like a cad — what

must she think of me? Poor Doris, I must put myself straight with her if I can. If she'll let me."

He had stopped in his study, forgetting Richard for the moment, but the sound of voices, one of which he recognized as Waters', roused him and pushing open the sitting-room door quickly, he almost collided with a very handsome young man—very tall, very blond and very elegantly dressed in rather foreign looking clothes—who was evidently just coming toward the door to open it himself.

He had not seen his cousin for seven years.

When Richard had first entered school in England, his foreign accent and his linguistic ability, coupled to a surprisingly English appearance, had caused him at first to be looked upon with distrust by his school fellows, as some strange kind of foreigner, but had he persevered, and being possessed of a genial disposition and a proper appreciation of the importance of making the right sort of friends, he had finally achieved popularity. Indeed he had made such progress, that upon Geoffrey's only visit to him in England, he had felt some misgiving as to his turning out to be quite good form, and was much relieved one day when the Hon. Dysart Stanley, aged fourteen, said to him, "I say, Whitely, what an awfully good sort your cousin is!"

Five years later, after his mother's death, Richard had in turn visited Geoffrey, and it was during this visit that the latter chose his profession. A pedestrian tour of the Italian lakes had been decided upon after Richard had been there for a fortnight, and it was at

Bellaggio, where they sat one evening after dinner, on the terrace of a small hotel, that they made the acquaintance of a famous Milanese architect who had come to Como to inspect a villa which he was erecting on the shore of the lake. For a week they were inseparable companions and before they parted, it had been arranged that Goeffrey should place himself under Faccini's instruction in the fall. Richard had announced his intention of doing the same, but soon after Goeffrey had settled himself in Milan, he received a letter from his cousin, written at Vienna, saying that his only passion was music, that as Goeffrey knew, he was already a capable pianist, and that he had gone to Vienna to place himself under a celebrated master, who had been kind enough to praise his ability highly.

Richard had written Goeffrey after his father's death, but he had not come to Italy, and he had seen him only once since, seven years before in Paris, where Goeffrey had gone to continue his studies.

"My dear, dear Dick," cried Goeffrey, seizing him with both hands, "how good it seems to see you; you bring a whiff of Europe with you. Whatever made you think of coming over here? Where are you stopping?"

"I only got in this morning," Richard answered. "I had my luggage sent to the Waldorf."

He spoke with the well modulated enunciation, soft and yet rapid, of the educated young Englishman, yet with a slight accent.

"But that won't do at all, you must come here,"

answered Goeffrey. "I have an extra bedroom. Waters! go to the Waldorf and arrange to have Mr. Whitely's luggage sent here directly it arrives."

"It is awfully good of you, Goeffrey, but really —"

"Not at all. I insist."

"It's awfully good of you all the same, Goeffrey, and thanks, very much. So this is your 'pied a terre,' is it? Very comfortable I should say — but good God! you are in the clouds," Richard exclaimed, going to a window. "Aren't you afraid to live at such a height?"

Goeffrey laughed. "I am on the top floor you see, and I took it on condition that I could build real chimneys in each room and have real fireplaces. They are almost unknown here now."

But as they talked of old days together, of other times and other places, of boyish adventures in many countries, of old acquaintances, each stimulating the other in the resurrection of half forgotten memories, Goeffrey became aware of a nervousness of manner in his cousin which he was sure was not natural. He was continually getting up, walking restlessly to and fro, sitting down and getting up again. While at times he talked with a spontaneous flow of gayety and light heartedness which Goeffrey remembered to have been one of the most charming traits of a character which could be very charming when it chose, at others he seemed to be struggling against a preoccupation which he had difficulty in overcoming. As if his mind, against his will, was returning constantly to things he wished, for the moment at least, to forget, to conceal. At the

same time he watched Goeffrey as if taking his measure. "Poor chap," thought Goeffrey, "he has something on his mind and he is trying to decide whether he shall tell me or not," and he half smiled to himself, it seemed so like the Richard he had known of old.

Suddenly he said abruptly, "Dick, something's the matter, what is it?"

Richard turned quickly toward him with a frightened half smile on his face, which vanished at once. His lip quivered, he dropped into a chair, tears came to his eyes and he seemed to be struggling with some emotion which prevented him from speaking. At last, with an effort he said, in a voice which he controlled with difficulty:

"I — I've had a hard time of it, Goeffrey."

"In what way, Dick, tell me."

"It's about money," Dick answered. He avoided looking at Goeffrey and with his hands moving restlessly on the arms of his chair, he stared fixedly at the cornice of the opposite wall as if by holding his head at that angle he would prevent the tears, which were brimming in his eyes, from inundating his cheeks.

"But I don't understand," Goeffrey answered. "Have you lost money?"

"Yes."

Dick snatched his handkerchief from his pocket and pressed it quickly to his eyes.

"How much?" asked Goeffrey.

"I'm afraid to tell you."

"But you will tell me sooner or later, how much have you lost?"

"All of it."

"Do you mean to say that you have lost *all* of your money?"

"Every penny of it, Goeffrey; I'm a pauper."

"But what the — what on earth have you done with it — Do you mean to say that you have lost it *all*?"

"I've told you already that I have lost it."

"But your shares, your property, are they gone too?"

"All of it, I tell you," Richard almost shouted in desperation, "every penny."

"But how, how?"

"Well, I spent it then — I think I'd better go, Goeffrey. I hadn't anyone but you to come to and I thought I might get a little advice, a little sympathy —"

"Don't be a fool," exclaimed Goeffrey, jumping up, "you've got to tell me about it and see what can be done." He almost pushed his cousin back in his chair, and as he sat down again Richard covered his face with his hands, and then all at once, snatching a letter from his pocket, he held it out, saying: "Here, read this, you might as well know the whole story at once."

Goeffrey drew it from its envelope and read:

"MY DEAR WHITELEY: Dysart has just had a letter from Lady Stanley in which she has asked him to send you away. From what Stanley tells me, your well known success with women has encouraged you to lay

siege to her. Dysart is in a furious rage and would start for Venice at once, were it not that the business which keeps him here will prevent his leaving for two days at least. I am not writing for your sake at all, because if you are such a cad as to make love to Dysart's wife, when you are living on his bounty, you deserve all that he would give you; but you know him and what you may expect if he catches you. I am only warning you to avoid a scandal, or perhaps something worse, for Dysart's sake and Lady Stanley's. So get away at once. Go to America — Dysart will make it too hot for you here, and try to earn a decent living. The occupation of parasite isn't one that most people admire and if I had been Dysart, I would have gotten rid of you long ago.

SEEBOLD.' ”

“That's a brutal letter; is it true?” said Goeffrey, looking up to see that his cousin had flushed darkly during the reading of it.

“It isn't true,” Richard answered excitedly, “I'll swear it. I've had affairs, I'll admit, but I never said or did one thing that Lady Stanley could have taken exception to. You remember Stanley? Well, I met him quite by accident a year ago in Paris. I was down then to my last hundred francs, and was on my way to cable to you to send me enough to get over here, when whom should I meet but Stanley, just as I was going into the telegraph office. He wanted to know what I was doing and finally I told him. It happened that he had received an appointment as chargé at the English embassy

at Rome and he took me along as his personal secretary; he is very rich, and wanted someone to look after his private affairs. Well, everything went on all right until Lady Stanley came. That woman is a devil. It may seem a rotten thing to say, but she made a dead set for me almost from the beginning, but things didn't come to a crisis until Dysart got a month's leave and we all went to Venice. We hadn't been there a fortnight, when Dysart was sent for and had to go back to Rome. The day he went, I had a scene with her which made her furious and her letter to Dysart was the result. When I heard from Seebold, I didn't know what to do. Between my word and Lady Stanley's, Dysart would surely take hers and I decided to go at once.

"Do you know how I came over?" he continued. "From Genoa in the second cabin and I had to sell my watch to do that, think of it? I stayed in the stinking hole, day after day, because I was afraid someone I knew might be on board. I only went out at night.

"Well," he went on after a pause, "that is the immediate reason for coming here and as for my money, it is gone, that's all, every sou of it frittered away. Mamma left it to me without restrictions of any kind, and it was not very long before my income seemed too small and I began to spend the principal. When that got low, I took to gambling of course, and any fool knows what that means, except the one who is doing it. Think of it, Goeffrey," — he got up and paced quickly up and down. "A hundred and twenty thousand pounds thrown away and not one thing to show for it."

"What are you going to do, how are you going to live?" Goeffrey asked coldly.

"I don't know, Goeffrey," Richard answered piteously. "I don't know how to do anything; I know nothing about business. Sometimes I think I had better make way with myself."

"That's a coward's remedy," Goeffrey answered. "Be a man, at least; you've got to take your medicine. It is terribly hard, of course, and you have been inconceivably foolish. Think of a man with an income large enough to satisfy every moderate wish, squandering not only the income, but every penny of the principal. What is at the bottom of it, Dick? Are you vicious? Was it women? Was it drink?"

Listening to Richard's misdeeds, Goeffrey had forgotten his own shortcomings. His sensations might have been those of a righteous judge, listening to the excuses of a criminal.

"No, it wasn't," answered Richard shortly, "but I am going to drink now. I can't stand this sort of thing," and he filled two glasses with whiskey and water, which stood on the table, handing one to Goeffrey.

The latter took it but had barely put it to his lips, when he shuddered violently, made a wry face and hastily put it down again. He looked at his cousin and saw that he was standing with his glass half raised, a dawning light of comprehension in his eyes, and at that moment Richard stooped and reaching under the table, lifted to view a tiny handkerchief. Goeffrey

frey flushed, and with an embarrassed smile held out his hand.

“Look here, Richard, circumstances seem to convict me of being a hypocrite. That’s all I can say, but at any rate I’ve no right to be so hard on you. Forgive me, will you?”

Richard laughed light heartedly. “Of course, my boy, with all my heart. I understand.”

“And suppose,” continued Goeffrey, “we drop the subject of your troubles for awhile, we will get you out of them somehow. Have you anything to do?”

“Not a thing in the world.”

“Very well, I have seats for Sembrich this afternoon, in the ‘Barber,’ that may help us to forget them. Shall we go?”

“By all means. That’s what I need, Goeffrey, music.”

## CHAPTER IV

"You see," said Richard, reverting to his troubles as he settled himself on the cushions of Goeffrey's sumptuous limousine, "this is what I have thrown away. This sort of thing. To have ruined myself was a crime, Goeffrey; I cannot live without the luxuries of life. They are as necessary to me, as his daily pittance is to that poor devil of a laborer we passed just then. We are so specialized, people like you and me, that we cannot exist without our environment, and just as it would be a crime for me to kill myself by depriving myself of air or by going without food, so it has been criminal in me to throw away that which makes life possible for me. Life can go on for certain periods, under unfavorable conditions, and I have of course no real intention at present at least, of making way with myself, but let me tell you this — I must have money — a great deal of it — I must, I tell you, or good-by to Richard Whitely."

The curtain had just gone down on the first act as they took their seats, and the great auditorium was full of that mysterious rustling caused by the innumerable slight automatic movements of the audience, after being released from the spell of the music. A patter of hand clapping sounding like a heavy rain arose, and a row of singers bowing low, marched hand in hand across the

stage, looking very small beneath the height of the enormous proscenium.

"A huge house," Richard said, looking about him, "much larger than Covent Garden. I like the dull red and the dull gold. The only background for a pretty woman. The effect is good. Very opulent, very rich."

"And why not?" answered Goeffrey. "Opera, the most luxurious spectacle of modern life, requires a setting like this."

His cousin, who had transferred his scrutiny to the boxes, suddenly called Goeffrey's attention to one in the first tier, in which a woman, dressed in black velvet and wearing a large black hat, was sitting alone. Although she was so far away that her features could not be seen with clearness, one could tell somehow that she was beautiful. She was leaning back in her chair, her head bent slightly. A hand in a white glove rested on the velvet railing of the box front and played idly with one of those feminine toys which are half opera glass, half lorgnette.

"Do you know her?" Richard asked.

"Yes, it is Mrs. Martel."

"I thought so, would you mind if I should go and speak to her?"

"Of course not. Do you know her?" asked Goeffrey.

"Quite well, in Paris," Richard answered, and was gone.

Goeffrey watched him until he disappeared and again when he came into Mrs. Martel's box, and he was struck

anew by his cousin's extreme good looks, and by his extraordinary air of elegance and distinction. He noticed that many people were looking at him. Yes, assuredly, he was highly specialized, one could tell instinctively that he belonged to that class who live on a special plane, breathe a special air, who are the favorites of fortune and who are so freely endowed with a material heritage of all that should make life desirable, that what to the average would seem like unattainable privilege they accept as a matter of course, cannot live without. Yes, money was necessary to a man like Richard. It was inconceivable that he should be without it. And now he had nothing. He was penniless. To Goeffrey, who knew quite well the advantages of money, there was something terrible about Richard's situation, the more so as he felt instinctively that he was helpless — was quite unfitted, not only by the life that he led, but by his education, his temperament, for the task of making it. But what was to be done? He knew before he asked himself this question, the answer to it. He must change his own manner of life sufficiently so that he could share his income with his cousin. He accepted this solution of the matter quite naturally — without hesitation. He did not stop to think that Richard had no real claim on him, was a stranger almost. It was enough that he had money, more than he really needed, and that Richard had none.

An usher approached him and handed him a card on which Miss Davidge's name was engraved. A few lines were written on it in pencil:

"Aunt Mary, the children and I are in Constance's box. Please come up.—NINA."

He got up eagerly. Nina here! What a lucky chance. How good it would be to see her after his rather trying experiences of the morning.

"And who," inquired Aunt Mary, as Goeffrey sat down, "is that fine looking young man you came in with just now?"

She was a tall, gaunt woman on whose bony features there rested an odd expression of fatuity and indecision, contrasting curiously with her strong masculine voice. Her ruling passion was pride of family, which is frequently found developed to an extraordinary degree among New Yorkers who have kept their money for two generations.

"My cousin, Richard Whitely," Goeffrey answered. "He has been abroad for years."

"I knew it was Richard," Nina said, "the instant I saw him."

"Do you mean the Waverly Place Whitely's?" Aunt Mary asked with a considerable show of interest. "Then his father must have been —"

"You must remember him, Auntie," Nina interposed, in an effort to prevent one of those complicated dissertations on relationships, which Aunt Mary was so fond of giving.

"Don't interrupt, Nina, please; his father was my mother's sister's brother-in-law"—Aunt Mary resumed. "By that I mean that his brother, who by the way was much older than your cousin's father, married my

mother's sister who was also much younger than my mother. This explains the difference in our ages, that is between your cousin's and mine, because you see I am no longer as young as I used to be, although I don't suppose he is either for that matter," and Aunt Mary leaned back comfortably in her chair.

"By the way," she continued, "why didn't you bring him up?"

"He went to speak to Mrs. Martel," Goeffrey explained.

"A woman who owes her position entirely to her husband," Aunt Mary remarked scornfully, "the daughter of an obscure west side doctor, I'm told. Now the Martels are one of our oldest families and I have always maintained that they are descended from the great Charles Martel, king of France — Martel means hammer —"

Nina, who had been scrutinizing Mrs. Martel's box through her opera glass, handed it to Goeffrey:

"Did you ever see two people more beautiful than they are?" she asked.

Goeffrey adjusted the glass and looked at them. His cousin, who was seated facing the front of the box, was talking earnestly to Mrs. Martel, whose position had hardly changed since they had looked at her from their seats. Her profile was turned toward him and he could see plainly her delicate clear cut features, her slightly reddish fair hair and her dark eyes under the shadow cast by the plumes of her hat. Al-

though he had noticed that her reception of his cousin had been carefully indifferent, it seemed to Goeffrey that there was an unmistakable air of intimacy in their attitude, and he thought, or was he mistaken, that he saw Richard, with a quick movement, take her hand which was nearest to him, and hold it for a moment before letting it drop again. Yes, he was sure that he was not deceived, and thinking of the letter he had shown him, and which he had instinctively accepted as being true, in spite of Richard's protestations, a feeling of resentment, of disgust, rose in him. Was his cousin one of that sort? Was he one of those men who are always playing that kind of game?

"Do you think that you can find people beautiful, if you don't like them?" he said at last.

"How silly, of course you can. You surely like Richard?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And not Mrs. Martel?"

"Perhaps, I can't tell, I know her so little."

But there was something in that air of guarded intimacy, in that surreptitious clasping of hands which made it distasteful to him to discuss them with her, and turning to Madeline, Nina's sister, a small pale girl of ten, and Humphrey, a little boy of seven, who, in a large white collar, was sitting with dangling legs, looking about him seriously, he asked:

"And how do *you* like the Opera?"

"Madeline has been here before," answered Nina, "but it is a new experience for Humphrey."

"I like it much better than Punch and Judy," said the latter.

"You see," Madeline explained, "whenever we go to a party they always have Punch and Judy or else a conjurer, and Humphrey is very tired of both. But I have seen 'Carmen' by Bizet, 'Rigoletto' by Verdi, and 'Faust' by Gounod." She pronounced the names very precisely, as if she were reciting a lesson. "Humphrey hasn't seen any of them."

"When I get bigger, I shall," Humphrey answered, looking at Madeline as if it were rather low of her to call attention to his lack of experience.

"Do you know," Nina said, "seeing Richard has brought Paris back so vividly — I mean when we were children there."

"It did to me too," said Goeffrey.

"Have I ever been in Paris, Nina?" Humphrey asked.

"No, my dear."

"Paris is the capital of France," answered Madeline, in her precise way.

"Yes," Goeffrey said, "and when I was a boy, it was bounded on the north by the Parc Monceau, on the east by the Nouveau Cirque, on the west by the Luxembourg Gardens and on the south by a pastry cook's shop in the Palais Royale, where Richard and I used to spend our pocket money."

Nina laughed. "How clearly that brings something back to me," she said. "I remember Richard's presenting to me with great *éclat*, a box of little cakes

once, when we were there together, and when you spoke of the pastry cook's, it brought that box vividly before me. I can remember it quite distinctly, white and shiny with gilt edges, it was tied with a little blue ribbon and I can see it, as plainly as if I had it in my hand now. Doubonnet — Pâtissier — Palais Royale."

"The very place," said Goeffrey.

"I was very much impressed by Richard's magnificence," Nina continued, "and I am afraid that for a time I thought you quite beneath my notice."

"And do you know what that wretched boy had done?" Goeffrey rejoined. "You know what rivals we were where you were concerned. Well, he had spent all of his own allowance and so he borrowed my last franc and bought those cakes with it. I punched him well when I found that he had stolen such a march on me."

"But, Goeffrey, that really was fine of you — to be loyal to him like that — you never told me."

"Of course not, it was nothing."

"But it must have seemed like something then?"

"It would seem like something now, Nina," Goeffrey answered.

She turned toward him quickly in surprise — "What do you mean?" she asked, and then looked away again. "Hush," she said, and Goeffrey saw that the curtain was going up on the second act.

The intrigues of Rosina, of Figaro, and the Count, were an old story to Goeffrey and after a few moments he ceased to be interested in them. But how charm-

ing it was to sit so intimately in this little circle, with the children, who tired already of being attentive, were trying, with naïve abstraction, to count the lights in the central chandelier. With Aunt Mary, who a little bored too, was looking in the program at the names of the new subscribers and then scrutinizing their boxes closely, and with Nina. "How attractive she is," he thought, "how pretty." He was sitting beside and a little behind her and he looked at her furtively. She was tall, straight and well shaped, her slender neck supported a little head whose small square chin and short straight nose, indicated that she did not lack decision. Her clear skin, her dark crisp brown hair and her violet eyes, gave an impression of vitality. She had very white teeth and her lips curved up at the corners of her mouth with a curious petulant expression, which Goeffrey thought wholly delightful.

"How attractive," he repeated, and leaning over to her he said:

"I wonder if you could not go to tea with me after it is over. We shall be out by five."

Nina hesitated for a moment. "Why, yes, I should love to."

"Would your Aunt mind?"

Nina laughed. "If I went to tea with *you* — rather not. Don't you know that you are a Waverly Place Hunter, a cousin of the Waverly Place Whitelys and that you can do no wrong?"

"Then you will come?" Goeffrey repeated.

"Yes, of course I shall."

"I want to talk to you about a lot of things," he continued. "I have so much to tell you."

"How interesting," said Nina, "what kind of things, tell me?"

"About Richard for one thing. I want to ask your advice about him, you are so sensible and clear headed — and then I want to talk about myself too."

"About yourself?"

"Yes, if I have the courage."

"Courage? I never thought that you were lacking in that."

"But it is about myself in connection with someone else." Goeffrey hoped that she would ask him who it was that he wished to talk about himself in connection with, but she did not answer.

"Shall I tell you who the someone else is?" he asked at length.

"If you like," she answered indifferently.

"It is you — Will you let me talk to you very freely, without reserve? If I have the courage?"

Goeffrey saw a faint flush rise in her cheeks, her lips parted as if she were about to answer him, but she hesitated. All at once her expression changed. "Hush," she whispered again, "the singing lesson."

The orchestra, which had been following the ever varying tempo of the score, stopped for a moment, and then the long swinging movements of the "Primavera" rose and filled the house with its irresistible rhythm and Sembrich's flute-like voice, with all its matchless art, floated out in unison. Swaying waves of delicious

sound floated about them. Interweavings of rhythmic movements. Goeffrey's pulses seemed to beat time to them, and always quickly responsive to the more lyrical forms of musical expression, the odd idea came to him that it would be quite easy for him to float off into space and to perform the evolutions of the waltz with movements of exaggerated but fantastic grace, far above the heads of the audience. He looked at Nina, whose only answer was a smile. She was moving her head slightly too, in tune with the music, and her body swayed rhythmically.

"How wonderful it would be if we could dance it," he said to her, "to that orchestra and to Sembrich's voice."

A faint color had come into her cheeks again, her eyes were shining. "Ah! no!" she answered, "I couldn't, it would be too ecstatic."

"Goeffrey is going to take me home, Auntie," Nina said, after the curtain had gone down on the finale, "and I think we would like to walk. We shall probably stop and get a cup of tea somewhere. Here is the carriage number," she added, handing her the ticket. "You are sure that you won't mind taking the children?"

"Very sure of that and also sure that Mr. Goeffrey is to be trusted," answered Aunt Mary cordially. "Noblesse oblige."

"Did you come in your car?" asked Nina, as they left the box. "What will your man do if he doesn't find you?"

"He'll go home, he's never sure of finding me anywhere."

They had not spoken since Sembrich had finished singing the "Primavera." Nina had become absorbed in the performance again and had seemed unconscious of her surroundings, except once when Humphrey had laughed heartily during the scene in which Figaro shaves Rosina's guardian. She had given him a quick smile then and had included Goeffrey in it.

Nina laughed. "Oh Goeffrey, how delightfully irresponsible you are."

"But how can one be responsible without responsibilities?" he answered. "I haven't any, I wish I had. Shall we go to Sherry's?"

He was feeling quite gay, quite light hearted again. It seemed so good to have her walking beside him in her modish gown, her smart hat — with her air of self reliance, made more vivid by that little petulant expression at the corners of her mouth.

"That's one of the things I want to talk to you about."

"About acquiring responsibilities?" she asked innocently.

Goeffrey looked up quickly to see if she were laughing at him.

"And Richard," said Nina, after they had emerged from the maelstrom of traffic, that surged in Broadway and were nearing Fifth Avenue through one of the cross streets, "shouldn't you have found him?"

"Oh, he went out with Mrs. Martel, long before we did."

"There he is now," Goeffrey announced, indicating a distant corner, when they had seated themselves in the large dining-room—"with Mrs. Martel. And speaking of responsibilities, I am afraid I *have* acquired one with a vengeance."

"What is it?" Nina asked.

"It's Richard, he's lost his money, every penny of it."

"Goeffrey!"

"This is quite *entre nous* you understand, yes, every penny and he has come to me—"

"How awful, but what can you do for him?"

"I can easily economize, I don't spend all of my income now, and I can very well arrange it so that he can have half. The only thing is that I am afraid that it won't be nearly enough—he must be frightfully extravagant."

Nina listened to him as if she would hardly believe what he was saying.

"But Goeffrey, that's Quixotic—Richard has no claim on you, you have no right to do a thing like that —"

"Why no right? He is my cousin, we were boys together, do you imagine that I could see him ruined as he is, and not offer to share what I have with him?"

"But suppose that you had lost *your* money, and that Richard had made *you* such an offer, would you accept it?"

Goeffrey hesitated. "But that's different, somehow. It will be such a pleasure for me to do it."

"And you mean that it wouldn't be for him?"

"No, I didn't mean that exactly, that would be un-

kind, but you see Richard is quite helpless. *He* can't make money."

"He won't try, Goeffrey — he'll marry it."

Goeffrey looked up quickly, an expression of admiration on his face.

"How clever you are," he said, "of course he will. Do you know I never thought of that."

"And Goeffrey, you have got to promise me that you will make no definite arrangement with him about money — I know something about life, I know what Richard is; he is a man of pleasure; that's all. He has many charming qualities and some good ones perhaps, but he is quite irresponsible and he is weak. No matter what you give him, he will spend more. You must not bind yourself in any way — will you promise?"

"Perhaps you are right," said Goeffrey, hesitating.

"I know that I am right. I have heard about Richard from time to time, more than you have, perhaps, and I know that he has been very wild. It may be after the lesson he has had, that he will be willing to settle down. There are plenty of girls who would be glad to have a man, like that, with his fascinations, his accomplishments. But she must have money, a great deal of it."

"That's just what he said, that he did not know how to live any other life than that which is made possible by a great deal of money. Do you think that that is true? That if one has had money, all one's life, so much that one has always been able to get what one

wanted, has never had to stop to think about the cost of things, has never known the disadvantages of being poor, and then loses everything, that it would be impossible to live? To learn how to live without it?"

Nina's expression had become very grave as Geoffrey put this question to her, and she seemed to be considering her answer with a seriousness which was almost unnecessary. Geoffrey recalled this long afterwards.

"It may seem cowardly to say so," she answered at length, "but I am afraid that Richard is right. Money doesn't count with us because we have it, but think of suddenly finding out that it really means everything, everything in life — and that we haven't any. Because after all, Geoffrey, it does mean everything. Poor people have their emotions, their individual temperaments and are happy or unhappy through them, just as we are — but the one essential thing in life to people who have money, is money. I am sure of it. Do you think it quite heartless of me to say so?"

"No," said Geoffrey, "but I feel somehow that you are wrong."

"Shall we go now?" she said, "it is getting late." She got up, still with that gravity of manner, and they went out without speaking.

"You will remember what I asked you to promise me about Richard," she reminded him as they turned down Fifth Avenue.

"Yes," said Geoffrey.

"And you promise?"

"Yes, I promise to make no definite arrangement for the present at least, and I will let you know before I do." And they walked on again in silence.

"No," Goeffrey thought it could not be that Nina was right. He had never felt the want of money and yet he had often been wretchedly unhappy. He looked at her as she walked beside him with that expression of gravity which still rested on her face, and he was sure that her thoughts were not happy ones. No, there were things in life worth much more than that, than money.

Nina lived in that quarter of the city known as Murray Hill, and as they reached Thirty-seventh Street, they paused for a moment and looked toward the south. The avenue from where they stood, fell away in a long downward sweep to Madison Square, as if bending beneath the weight of the buildings, beneath the masses of stone, steel and iron piled on either side of it. It was almost dark. A wintry sky with masses of stormy clouds rose before them against which the silhouettes of the enormous structures showed black, with a kind of fantastic grandeur. The lines of the street lights, looking like silver globes, receded in long curves and between them a river of yellow lamps on the carriages and motors, flowed ceaselessly toward the north. A wind from the east, strong and biting, made the blood tingle, and the scene spread out before them, the fantastic buildings, the stormy sky, the rows of lamps, the moving crowds on the pavements, gave them the impression that they were looking at the manifestation of forces which

were powerful, complex and incomprehensible. They paused still for another moment, and then went on again.

"Life is very strange," said Nina at last.

"Life is what we make it," answered Goeffrey, thinking perhaps of Richard.

"A man may say that," Nina returned with a sigh, "but with a woman, life is so often what other people make it for her."

"Nina," Goeffrey said to her, speaking very earnestly, "I told you at the opera that I was going to ask you something if I had the courage—I have found my courage at last and so I shall ask you now. Let me help you to make your life what you would like it to be. We have been talking about money. I have never known the want of it, nor have you, but there is something lacking in my life that I know quite well it can never get for me. You said that money was the one essential thing, but I know that you are wrong—there are two things worth much more, and they are love and sympathy—do you think me very sentimental when I say this? And although you have never told me, don't you feel yourself that you need something; that life lacks something for you in order to make it complete? Isn't it true?"

"Yes," she answered, speaking so softly that he could hardly hear her.

"And you lack just those things, love and sympathy, and I can give them to you—"

"Is that really what you were going to ask me, Goeff-

frey?" she said at length, but with no hint of incredulity in her question.

"Yes, that was it, but I have been afraid to speak about it. At times I have wanted not to, because I used to delude myself too, with the idea that having money, I needed nothing else, but lately I have been finding out my mistake — I do need something — you — very, very much."

"Can you answer me?" he added after a moment.

They had reached her house and were standing at the foot of the steps.

"Not now, Goeffrey, I must think."

"May I call to-morrow?"

"Not here, I am never alone, and not so soon, I must have more time" — she paused a moment and then added — "Come to Constance's next Thursday," and she held out her hand.

## CHAPTER V

It occurred to Goeffrey as he walked home, that he had had an eventful day. He had made an offer of marriage to one woman and a proposal of a much less conventional kind to another within a few hours. Yet he had been quite sincere with each. His invitation to Doris was the result of a sudden and inexplicable act on her part and its effect on a deeply sympathetic bond which had been developed between them. It was entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated, while his proposal to Nina was the result of deliberation, after he had, by a slow process, reached the conclusion that it was time to settle down. His temporary defection under the attraction which Doris undoubtedly had for him, did not in any way indicate a lack of sincerity with Nina. Love with young people may sometimes be less personal than is generally supposed. It may be a commodity which they are eager to exchange for equal value. They may feel the need of loving and of being loved.

Richard returned to Goeffrey's rooms at seven, and after dining quietly at the latter's club, they had returned to them at once.

The east wind, which had been blowing all day, had increased in violence, and in the morning, the city was

being swept by torrents of cold and penetrating rain, through which the buildings at times appeared dimly, and at times vanished as if being looked at through the waving folds of an enormous curtain, semi-transparent. The pavements were deserted and as night fell, the reflections of the lamps on the surface of the streaming asphalt, gave the streets the appearance of canals, brimming with black water.

During the ensuing night the temperature fell sharply, and on Monday the whole city was encased in ice. The buildings in course of demolition and the steel cages of the new structures, stood deserted. A fine rain still descended, freezing as it fell, the streets were like glass and it would seem that the activities of the city must be frozen under this icy covering.

But nothing stops the cohorts of those relentless armies that battle all day in the city. From every side they press in. The wheels of the electric trains, driven by their powerful motors, slip on their icy rails, but they must carry their regiments. The tunnels sweat with their steaming swarms. The ferry boats groaning under their burdens, push their way in their slips; and as these thousands are disgorged into the streets, a galvanic activity seizes them; the machinery of the city begins to move and that strange battle, which is renewed each day, begins again. In the great buildings, the elevators sweep ceaselessly up and down, metal doors clash, a million telephone bells ring, the telegraphic transmitters and the stock indicators click unendingly, the electric trams grinding on their steel grooves, clang

their bells, the rushing trains in the tunnels shake the earth, a million activities lend their varied sounds to a bedlam already defying analysis and ever up and down, in and out, the hordes surge unendingly. The ice in the streets is rubbed into a greasy slush under their feet, the freezing rain is unheeded, nothing can stop them and yet in all this strife, this ceaseless spending of energy, there seems to be something automatic, something unintelligent, a kind of somnambulistic frenzy, and that if one should say to them, "Whither? For what purpose?" they would stop, look up dumbly and pass on in confusion, not knowing what to say.

The temperature rising, a dense fall of snow followed. Soft, heavy and continuous, changing again to rain and it was not until Thursday morning that angry gleams shining through masses of dark clouds, showed that the storm was passing.

During these days, Waters' culinary resources were tested severely, as Goeffrey had decided that he would take his meals at home until the weather improved. Richard had been out twice, returning each time in excellent spirits. He had not referred again to his affairs and Goeffrey, much occupied with his own, had made no attempt to discuss them with him. He had, however, offered his cousin a generous loan, which the latter had accepted gratefully.

Mrs. Aladine had never abandoned the old custom of a weekly day, but on this afternoon at five, only three persons sat with her in the library of the great house her husband had left her when he died, Nina,

Goeffrey and Mr. Bancroft. Richard had promised to drop in later. Mr. Bancroft, an old gentleman of whom time had bereft almost everything except an income, came each week with unfailing regularity. A bachelor so old that he had outlived most of his contemporaries, he knew that here at least, he was always welcome. He was inordinately fond of tea. Every week, after he had finished his first cup, and when Mrs. Aladine without asking permission, would proceed to fill it again, he would raise his hand with a protesting gesture saying, "No more, dear lady!" and Constance, without stopping, would answer softly, "Just one cup to please me," and he would acquiesce with a gratified smile. This byplay would be repeated invariably four and perhaps five times, with almost the same gestures, the same words.

Tea had not yet arrived and Mr. Bancroft was growing noticeably restless. Goeffrey rose and going to one of the windows, turned the knob of the ormolu espagnolette and opened the casement. On the Avenue, carriages and motor cars were to be seen again, moving rapidly north and south, an occasional pedestrian passed. In the park opposite, dark branches showed against the sky, and far on the other side vast cubes of masonry rose from which lights gleamed. A rush of cold air entered the room bringing with it the odor of dead leaves and of earth soaked with rain.

Mrs. Aladine shivered. "Shut the window, Goeffrey, please." Leaning across the arm of her chair, she pressed an electric button.

Goeffrey closed the casement, but before returning he looked about him, at this room which he had seen so often but which never failed to impress him pleasantly with its cunning semblance of antiquity.

Fifty feet long and perhaps eighteen high, fluted pilasters of some dark wood with capitals of dull gold supported the cornice. The ceiling at the ends and sides was divided by carved moldings, into panels of varied and yet symmetrical shapes, enriched with frets and dentals, garlands and cupids. And all of this profusion of ornament, the flowers, the cornucopiæ discharging from their scalloped mouths, masses of fruit, the arabesques and the fretted moldings, all gleaming with the dusty tones of antique gilding, formed but a frame for the great central panel thirty feet long, in which glowed a painting from a Venetian palace, a Tiepolo, "Mercury Descending from Olympus." Between the pilasters from floor to cornice, the recessed walls were filled with books. At the end of the room where Mrs. Aladine and her companions sat, blazing logs, in a great fireplace of black and yellow marble, cast a ruddy light on the floor and on the walls, and in a distant corner a single reading lamp, upon a table, made the surrounding gloom translucent.

An old servant dressed in black breeches, black stockings and a purple coat, entered.

"Ask Hopkins to bring tea, if you please, Jacob," Mrs. Aladine said.

"Yes, madam."

No one spoke for some moments, sitting quietly under

the hypnotic influence of the dancing flames. Presently the whirr of a motor rose from the street, a bell sounded from the distance and a door closed with a heavy clang of metal. Steps were heard on the marble treads of the staircase.

"Will you look at the Rembrandt, sir?" Jacob was heard saying in a respectful tone, from the foyer.

"A glimpse, Jacob," answered a strong almost harsh voice.

Someone crossed the hall, the click of electric buttons sounded and a flood of light illuminated a doorway at the further end of the library leading to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Aladine smiled.

"That is Mr. Storey; it is a whim of his, he always looks at it as soon as he comes in and just as he is going away," and raising her voice, she called, "we are in here, Vincent."

"An extraordinary man," remarked Mr. Bancroft, "a harsh, powerful man and yet I sometimes think, one gifted, or cursed, with very delicate sensibilities."

A huge bulky figure appeared in the doorway. "Jacob," he called to the old servant, "telephone my secretary, that I shall be here for an hour, but not to disturb me unless absolutely necessary."

He was enormous; not only tall but grossly fat — and yet he walked with an active, almost light step. His head, with its powerful chin, square cranium, covered sparsely with black hair, and finely modeled nose, conveyed, in spite of his enormous jowls, an impression

of force, perhaps nobility, but one of those purplish birthmarks, beginning broadly on the right temple, and almost encircling the eye, gave him an expression almost sinister and aroused at the first glance, a feeling of repulsion.

Hopkins, who had just come in with tea, wheeled a large chair up to the fire and Storey lowered himself into it, after greeting each in turn.

"What is this," he asked, picking up from the table at his elbow a statuette of cast brass, six inches high; a grotesque representation of a nude woman performing the "*danse du ventre*."

"A Persian antique, Vincent," answered Constance. "I saw it in a shop the other day and I bought it for you. Do you like it?"

Storey looked up quickly and held out his hand. "That was good of you, to think of me," he said in his deep voice, "but I should like to give you something in exchange for it — do you know what I have thought? Goeffrey, you are a man of taste, isn't something needed at the top of the stairs between the candelabras?"

"But not to hide the tapestry there," Goeffrey remonstrated.

"Of course not to hide the tapestry, just below it. I bought a chest in Rome a couple of months ago, which would go excellently there I think. I will send it to you when I get it."

"Oh, Vincent," answered Constance, laughing, "I shall never make any more exchanges with you, I always get so much the best of the bargain."

"If you don't like my chest, send it back, but I warn you that I shall not return you your Persian antique; it is immensely clever, and do you know," he continued, "that I have seen it before? yes, twenty years ago — It was in the collection of Prince Demidoff, when it was sold at Florence. I bought a few things and I wanted this, but I got there a little late that day and it had disappeared."

Nina had gone to the piano at the other end of the room, and was playing the "Primavera" softly. Geoffrey got up and went toward her, his heart thumping in his breast.

It seemed to him that it took a very long time to cross the room, as if he were being urged toward her and at the same time retarded by opposing forces; a sort of terror seized him; suppose she should say yes, was he making a mistake? For a moment he saw Doris again, seated on the arm of his chair, with that air of depression, of fatigue, that air of one carrying a burden hard to bear, and he hesitated — but suppose she said no. At this thought he was still more terrified, and he went on again.

"I am worried about Nina," Constance was saying in an undertone, "she has seemed nervous and unhappy of late."

"I have noticed that that young man seems very fond of her," observed Mr. Bancroft, putting down his cup. "No more, dear lady," he continued, raising his hand.

"To please me," Constance answered, smiling at him with that air of charming coquetry, which some women

reserve for old men. "She is fond of him too I think, but it isn't that, it's something at home. It is remarkable what a nice girl she is when one considers her bringing up under the care of that eccentric old woman. She never sees her father."

"I am afraid Davidge is getting to the end of his rope," Storey said, lowering his voice.

"Are there rumors about him?"

"Not yet, but there will be."

"I hope Goeffrey's money is safe."

"What do you mean?" asked Storey, looking at her.

"Didn't you know that Mr. Davidge is trustee of Goeffrey's father's estate?"

An expression almost of amazement crossed Storey's features. "Davidge, of all men!" He turned to Jacob who had come in with some message for his mistress, "Will you get my secretary on the telephone and let me know, I would like to speak to him."

"I will try, sir," Jacob answered, "but I have been unable to get him yet."

Goeffrey had reached Nina's side and was bending over her. His agitation made it hard for him to speak. "Nina, will you tell me?" he said at last.

"Tell you what," she answered. She did not look up and her fingers did not cease moving over the keys.

"You know."

"But what can I say. So many people who marry, regret it so soon."

"But we would not."

"Why?"

"Because, Nina, I know — I know that we would not."

"Is that a reason, Goeffrey?"

"No, but you know that sometimes we feel that things are so, without knowing why — we have convictions, presentiments that we know are trustworthy."

"Yes."

"And I have a presentiment like that about you and about myself."

"I have presentiments too," she said presently.

"About me?"

"Yes."

"About yourself?"

"Yes."

"Don't you believe that I am sincere?"

"Yes."

"Are you more sure of yourself than of me?"

She hesitated for a moment, glanced up at him quickly and looked down again.

"Perhaps." Did she mean to give him hope?

"Nina," he exclaimed and checked himself, "you know what you were to tell me to-day," he said at last. "You know what I want you to say, what would make me happier than anything else to hear."

Nina still played the *Primavera* softly. He could not see her eyes, which half veiled by their lashes, were fixed on the key board. The subdued notes of the music gave an emotional emphasis to the spoken words.

"When I came over to you," Goeffrey continued, "the thought came to me that you might say 'No,'

and the possibility of such an answer terrified me beyond words. Don't say that, say what I want so much to hear — please, please."

"But are you sure?" she answered, still playing, in a voice so low that he had to bend yet closer to hear her, "are you quite, quite sure? Isn't it perhaps more because you are tired of the life you have been leading and that you want to change it — more than that you want me? Are you quite, quite sure?"

As she was speaking, he noticed her round wrists with the white firm hands moving skillfully on the keys — the soft rise and fall of her breathing, the curve of her cheeks on which the downcast lashes made faint shadows, the waves of her dark hair under the rim of her hat, and he felt that she was more desirable, more to be wanted than anything in life.

She raised her head slowly and stared straight into his eyes, but with an apparent air of abstraction that seemed to rob her look of any personal significance.

"Are you quite, quite sure?" she repeated.

The arrangement of the waltz was not an easy one, but she was playing it without effort. The tempo, which she had increased slightly, seemed to bear him into regions of lyrical expression as he answered her.

"Quite sure," he said, "more sure than I can tell you, so sure that if you say 'No,' I shall go away, because I could not bear to be where I could see you — be always reminded of what I wanted so much and could not have. Oh! Nina, tell me, but please don't say that it is 'No.'"

She began to sway slightly to the music whose tempo she had again increased until with two sharp chords she stopped, raised her head with a bewitching smile and looked again straight into his eyes.

"It's 'Yes,' Goeffrey," she whispered.

An overpowering desire to take her in his arms possessed him, he looked about almost desperately. "Let us go into the drawing-room. I must see you alone."

Nina caught his hand for an instant and pressed it furtively. "No! No!" she whispered again — "not now, later perhaps," and giving him again that bewitching smile, she jumped up and walked quickly toward the other end of the room.

Richard had come in with Mrs. Martel and had been presented to Mrs. Aladine and three other persons had also arrived; a Mr. and Mrs. Vanderveer and Mr. Arthur Vernay. Mr. Vanderveer's chief claim to distinction, aside from being very rich, was the fact that he had been educated for the navy. He was a small timid man, who was in the habit of addressing all of his conversation to his wife, a magnificent, placid, English woman, of whom he was very jealous, for no reason whatever. Vernay, a bachelor of forty-five, was one of those refined voluptuaries who have existed in all ages. His face wore a serene but empty expression. His profile was of that noble cast one sees on Roman coins. His cheeks were those of a gourmet, slightly mottled with a network of delicate bluish veins and he was beginning to show signs of approaching baldness, which he endeavored to conceal by a careful arrange-

ment of his fine light brown hair. He gave the impression of one who had always slept in the softest beds, between the thinnest sheets, drunk the choicest wines, smoked the finest cigars, eaten the richest food and lived beneath his affable exterior, a fixed determination never to do anything else.

He was entertaining Mr. Bancroft with the story of an accident which had befallen some woman when they could get to her, her horse had been broken both her legs. One never heard of anything happening in England."

Martel and Richard were sitting

"He has just been telling me about your brother as a pianist," Constance said to Geoffrey. "Come up with Nina, "but we can't get him for some reason."

"Nina, you know, is extremely temperamental," said Geoffrey.

"Traumerei, Richard." Nina greeted him with a smile and held out her hand.

"And do you remember that?" Geoffrey interposed. "What a day that was. You remember it, Richard, don't you?"

Richard looked mystified. "I must confess that I don't."

"I only remember that Richard used to play Traumerei, when he was sentimental," said Nina. Geoffrey made a gesture of disappointment.

"So you have both forgotten it. I suppose I remem-



She began to sway slightly to the music whose tempo she had again increased until with two sharp chords she stopped, raised her head with a bewitching smile and looked again straight into his eyes.

"It's 'Yes,' Goeffrey," she whispered.

An overpowering desire to take her in his arms possessed him, he looked about almost despondently. "Let us go into the drawing-room. I must see Mr. Vernay."

Nina caught his hand for an instant furtively. "No! No!" she whispered now, later perhaps," and giving him a bewitching smile, she jumped up and went toward the other end of the room.

Richard had come in with Mrs. Vernay. He presented to Mrs. Aladine and Mr. Vernay, who had also arrived; a Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Vernay. Mr. Vandervort, in distinction, aside from being very rich, was a small, timid man, who was in the habit of pressing all of his conversation to his wife, a magnificent, placid, English woman, of whom he was very jealous, for no reason whatever. Vernay, a bachelor of forty-five, was one of those refined voluptuaries who have existed in all ages. His face wore a serene but empty expression. His profile was of that noble cast one sees on Roman coins. His cheeks were those of a gourmet, slightly mottled with a network of delicate bluish veins and he was beginning to show signs of approaching baldness, which he endeavored to conceal by a careful arrange-

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ment of his fine light brown hair. He gave the impression of one who had always slept in the softest beds, between the thinnest sheets, drunk the choicest wines, smoked the rarest cigars, eaten the richest food and that he concealed beneath his affable exterior, a fixed determination never to do anything else.

Mrs. Vanderveer was entertaining Mr. Bancroft with an account of an accident which had befallen some friend. "But before they could get to her, her horse had rolled on her and broken both her legs. One never hears of such things happening in England."

Constance, Mrs. Martel and Richard were sitting together.

"Mrs. Martel has just been telling me about your cousin's ability as a pianist," Constance said to Goeffrey, as he came up with Nina, "but we can't get him to play for some reason."

"My cousin, you know, is extremely temperamental," said Goeffrey.

"Play Traumerei, Richard." Nina greeted him with a smile and held out her hand.

"And do you remember that?" Goeffrey interposed. "What a day that was. You remember it, Richard, don't you?"

Richard looked mystified. "I must confess that I don't."

"I only remember that Richard used to play Traumerei, when he was sentimental," said Nina. Goeffrey made a gesture of disappointment.

"So you have both forgotten it. I suppose I remem-

ber it, because all of my surroundings then were so new and delightful. It wasn't much though in itself, just a day in London. I had come from Italy to visit Richard, and you, Nina, were there with your mother, en route to Paris. We had been to the Drury Lane to see the pantomime with your mother's maid, and when we came back, we had tea with your mother in a big, old fashioned parlor. Such delicious tea, with such appetizing English bread and butter and such heavenly jam, and after Richard and I had eaten a shameful lot of everything, your mother said: 'Play something, Richard,' and Richard went to the piano (it was one of the old fashioned kind with candles burning in sconces on it) and played Traumerei. There were no lights in the room, except the candles on the piano, and Nina and her mother, and I, all sat by the fire and listened, and as I looked out of the window I could see the trees in Hyde Park through the dusk. Traumerei always brings that back."

"I should say that *you* were temperamental, Goefrey," said Richard, who had been watching his cousin's expressive face and nervous gestures, with a half amused smile, "but I will admit that my playing is very much influenced by my surroundings. If I played Traumerei, it was probably because it seemed to me to be the thing for that old fashioned parlor, the candles, the firelight and all that, but in this wonderful room of Mrs. Aladine's, for the moment nothing comes to me that I would like to play here, but it will, it always does, and then if you will let

turned to Constance, "I will come and play

Vernay and Mr. Vanderveer, were standing distance, talking together in subdued tones. "I'll get your secretary, sir," Jacob said, apologetically, "the telephone seems not to be working — it is the storm."

"All right," Storey answered, and then as a new person entered the room and greeted Mrs. Aladine, he said, "Ah! here is Martel! What news,

he came over to him and looked toward Nina smiling. "I haven't been downtown, but I heard rumor at the club that Davidge's bank is in

trouble. His wife's husband — and certain people always speak of him — was rather below average height, with the broad shoulders and powerful legs of an athlete. He wore a short beard and against his bronzed skin his eyes were a deep blue. He gave the impression of one who had been open, in the free air of the sea and his manner was that of a sailor. The backs of his brown hands were covered with a thick growth of hair. He seemed like a man who had a strong hand, but one with rather slow wits, and lines of worry between his eyebrows and other lines about his mouth which gave him a bitter expression.

Nina in response to a mute appeal from Goeffrey,

ber it, because all of my surroundings then were so pleasant and delightful. It wasn't much though in comparison to a day in London. I had come from Italy with Richard, and you, Nina, were there with you on your en route to Paris. We had been to the Theatre Francaise to see the pantomime with your mother's maid. When we came back, we had tea with your mother in the old fashioned parlor. Such delicious tea, such delicious appetizing English bread and butter and such delicious jam, and after Richard and I had eaten a lot of everything, your mother said: 'Play Richard,' and Richard went to the piano (of the old fashioned kind with candles burning in the sconces on it) and played Traumerei. There were only you, and her mother, and I, all sat by the fire and as I looked out of the window I could see the trees in Hyde Park through the dusk. It always brings that back."

"I should say that *you* were temperamentally very frey," said Richard, who had been watching you in your expressive face and nervous gestures, with a amused smile, "but I will admit that my playing of Traumerei was very much influenced by my surroundings. It was probably because of the room, the candles, the firelight and all that, but it was the wonderful room of Mrs. Aladine's, for the moment nothing comes to me that I would like to play here, but it will, it always does, and then if you will let

me —" he turned to Constance, "I will come and play it for you."

Storey, Vernay and Mr. Vanderveer, were standing at a little distance, talking together in subdued tones.

"I cannot get your secretary, sir," Jacob said, approaching Storey, "the telephone seems not to be working properly — it is the storm."

"Never mind," Storey answered, and then as a new arrival entered the room and greeted Mrs. Aladine, he exclaimed, "Ah! here is Martel! What news, Charles?"

Martel came over to him and looked toward Nina before answering. "I haven't been downtown, but there was a rumor at the club that Davidge's bank is in trouble."

Mrs. Martel's husband — and certain people always called him that, when speaking of him — was rather below the average height, with the broad shoulders and slightly bowed legs of an athlete. He wore a short blond mustache and against his bronzed skin his eyes looked intensely blue. He gave the impression of one who lived in the open, in the free air of the sea and his gait was that of a sailor. The backs of his brown muscular hands were covered with a thick growth of short blond hairs. He seemed like a man who had himself well in hand, but one with rather slow wits, and there were lines of worry between his eyebrows and other lines about his mouth which gave him a bitter expression.

Nina in response to a mute appeal from Goeffrey,

had slowly moved toward the other end of the room again, and they sat down on one of the velvet covered benches which stood in the recesses of the windows.

"And so Richard used to be sentimental and play Traumerei to you," began Goeffrey. "Did he make love to you?"

Nina laughed. "We were children, you remember. Are you jealous already? But as to making love, Richard makes love to everybody, that's his specialty." She paused for a moment — "Constance will be the next."

"Nina!" Goeffrey was horrified. "He isn't good enough for her."

"I didn't say that he would marry her, but he'll try."

"I shall dislike Richard before very long, if I don't look out."

"Why should you? He has got to marry someone with money. We agreed on that point. He must, don't you understand, and you don't think for a moment that Constance is always going to stay a widow? Mr. Storey would like to marry her."

"That monster. Did she tell you?"

"There probably isn't anything to tell, but anyone can see that he is in love with her, and I don't think you ought to call him a monster."

"I know that was a beastly thing to say, because I like him immensely, but the thought of her marrying him is terrible, somehow. She is so beautiful and — and so delicate."

"I don't think that she will marry him. I don't think she could; but she will marry someone, she's lonely you know. I hope she gets the right sort of man; but I shall always feel afraid for Constance, she's too sympathetic; she lets her feelings carry her away against her judgment."

Nina had glanced out of the window. "Here comes Mr. Pandolfi," she said, "he's so tiresome, he's always calling on one. Will you get me a cup of tea? Hurry, there's a dear, and get back before he comes in. Perhaps he won't see us."

Goeffrey was completely happy, the things which had been lacking in his life had found their way into it very quickly and wonderfully. He was conscious of an extraordinary sense of well being, which seemed to fill, not only his mind and his soul, but his body as well. Why had he put off for so long taking the necessary steps to satisfy that craving for sympathy and affection which all men feel.

Mr. and Mrs. Vanderveer were saying good-by to Constance, and everybody had stood up. Mr. Bancroft lingered by the tea table. Storey, Vernay and Martel were still standing at a little distance and Mrs. Martel and Richard were exchanging a few words in an undertone.

Suddenly Pandolfi hurried into the room. He was tall and well built, slightly inclined to stoutness, with black wavy hair closely cut. He wore a small black mustache which was waxed at the ends and his eyes were large, dark and very handsome. He came in

quickly, clearly under the influence of some excitement, and waving his hat and stick which he carried in one hand, around his head, he cried:

“Davidge has absconded, the examiners have taken possession, they say that his bank is absolutely cleaned out. There’ll be the devil to pay to-morrow.”

Alarm was depicted on the faces around him.

“Shut up, you fool,” cried Goeffrey furiously, turning so quickly that Mr. Bancroft seized the tea pot — “don’t you see that Nina is here?”

All turned and looked at her. She was coming toward them from the other end of the room, walking slowly and in a dazed way, as if she had received a blow which had paralyzed her mental faculties. For a moment they stood spell-bound, watching her curious slow somnambulistic progress toward them, and then Goeffrey and Constance ran toward her.

“Oh! Nina, Nina!” was all that Goeffrey could say, but Constance, putting her arm around her, led her out of the room.

Mrs. Martel went up to her husband, who happened to be standing alone. “I am going now, shall I take you home?” She spoke in a voice so low that the others could not hear her, with a curious expression of mingled defiance, fear and supplication on her beautiful face. Martel looked at her, once, with his intensely blue eyes, an inexplicable look, and turning, joined the others without answering her.

Constance came into the room again and hurried to Storey’s side.

"She insists on going home, but do you think that she ought to?"

"She must not think of it, the house will be besieged by the reporters and probably the police. Could you keep the children and her aunt over night?"

"Yes, I have been telling her so."

"Very well, then, I will go there and tell them to come. To-morrow we can see what to do. But tell her that I say positively that she must stay here." Storey turned toward the door.

"I think I will go with you, Storey," said Martel.

"Good," answered the latter, and they went out together.

## CHAPTER VI

WHEN Goeffrey came back to the library a little later, Mrs. Aladine had taken Nina upstairs with her and told him that he might come again in the morning, he found it deserted. Although he knew that it was quite probable that his own affairs would be seriously, perhaps disastrously, affected by Davidge's failure, the catastrophe which had overtaken Nina seemed so much more appalling, that he hardly thought of them, but he wondered what Richard would say and he felt sure that it would be a harder blow for his cousin, than for himself. He looked at his watch; it was seven o'clock. He had left Mrs. Aladine's house and was walking down the Avenue. Before him lay the open space at the entrance to the park. To the right he could see through the trees, a gigantic hotel rising story on story, its white walls dotted with lights shining from innumerable windows. On the opposite side, others scarcely less lofty towered before him, and between them, like a river opening between cliffs, Fifth Avenue discharged into the plaza before it, its torrent of moving lamps, yellow and silver, the dark vehicles which bore them and the current of people on the sidewalks.

He heard someone calling him, and turning saw Pandolfi hurrying after him.

"Look here, Hunter!" he exclaimed in an angry

tone, as he came up. "At Mrs. Aladine's just now, you spoke to me in a way I didn't like, and I want to know what the devil you meant by it. What the devil do you mean by speaking to me in that way?"

"Was I rude?" said Goeffrey. "I don't remember what I said, but I'm awfully sorry. You see I knew it would be a most awful blow for Nina, and I was in hopes that she might not have heard you, and I wanted to stop you from saying anything more —"

"Well, you don't suppose that I am any more anxious to hurt her feelings than you are, do you? And besides I don't see any reason why you should appoint yourself her special protector —"

Pandolfi's manner was such that Goeffrey was beginning to lose his temper too.

"You don't?" he asked. "Well, there's a very good reason."

"What do you mean?"

"It's none of your business, but I don't mind telling you that we're engaged."

Pandolfi came to a standstill, looked at Goeffrey and laughed; a short, politely insolent laugh, then he walked on again.

Goeffrey was so exasperated that he became personal.

"Look here, Pandolfi, I wish you would get over that beastly Italian habit of yours, of coming to a dead stop when you are walking with anyone, it's so disconcerting."

This reference to a racial trait which he had often tried to break himself of, seemed to infuriate Pandolfi,

and for a moment, like some beast seen in concealment, the cruel Neapolitan nature which was always slumbering beneath the surface, showed itself in his face.

"So you don't like my habits, my Italian habits," he answered slowly and with a menacing tone in his voice. "Very well, let me tell you that no one will care now what you like or what you don't like — do you know why? Because you are nothing, you are a pauper."

"Good God," said Goeffrey, "that's a new point of view. I am nothing, because I have no money — I have money, therefore I am; a stock broker's version of Descartes; but just let my affairs alone, will you? They don't concern you, and I don't see how you should know anything about them anyway."

Suddenly he thought of what Doris had said — her apprehensions.

"What *do* you know about my affairs, by the way. What business is it of yours?" he replied, looking at Pandolfi suspiciously.

Pandolfi's manner changed quickly for some reason; the cruel expression disappeared.

"Excuse me, Hunter," he said in a tone of almost exaggerated friendliness, "I ought not to have said that. I only repeated what I have heard, that Davidge had lost his own and everybody's money he had anything to do with — and as to your engagement, let me offer you my heartiest congratulations."

Pandolfi had stopped, intending evidently to turn off the Avenue, and Goeffrey, who always found it difficult

to harbor ill will against anyone, held out his hand saying:

"Thank you, Pandolfi — and I am sorry for what I said to."

"That's all right then — I shall leave you here, but I shall see you to-night of course."

Goeffrey wondered why he should see Pandolfi again that night, and the latter's meaning was not made plain to him until he reached his rooms.

A table laid for ten stood in the middle of the parlor. A cloth of crimson silk covered it, and a mass of yellow tulips rose from a large bowl of Chinese porcelain which stood in the center. Other tulips lying on the cloth traced a fantastic pattern, and still others filled every available receptacle. The effect against the dark back-ground of the room, and Goeffrey's really beautiful furniture, proved to be as Waters had predicted, most pleasing — but Goeffrey was thunderstruck.

He had forgotten his party completely.

"You never told me about it," said Richard reproachfully. He had come in a few minutes earlier. "I had no idea Waters had such a coquettish taste."

"Here's a situation that would please a playwright," answered Goeffrey, looking about him in dismay. "On a certain day I am engaged to be married — a little later I hear that I have lost my money, and in the evening I give a supper to some of my friends of the theater. But I mustn't do it — I must stop it somehow."

Richard seemed not to have heard what Goeffrey had said of his engagement, but was looking at him with a startled expression on his face.

"That you have lost your money?" — his tone was half incredulous, — "how could you lose it?"

"You knew, didn't you, that Mr. Davidge had charge of my property?"

"If I ever knew it, I had forgotten," Richard answered. "It never occurred to me that his failure could affect you in any sort of way."

"I'm afraid it's true, Richard. Pandolfi was kind enough just now to tell me that I was a pauper — and so I am, I'm afraid, almost at least. We are in the same boat, Richard." He was smiling quite cheerfully as he spoke.

"But what are we going to do?" Richard demanded. He seemed exasperated by Goeffrey's manner and spoke in an irritated tone, as if he considered it to be his cousin's fault. "How can you smile like that after what has happened?"

"We are going to make money again now that we have lost it," Goeffrey answered, still with the same air of composure.

Richard got up and began to pace the floor; his exasperation increasing. "Well, really, Goeffrey," he said bitterly, "you can't make money, I can't make it. It is utter, absolute, silly rot to talk like that. Aren't you going to do anything, see your lawyer, do something, take some step to protect yourself if you can? You knew what it might mean when you heard of

Davidge's failure this afternoon, have you done nothing?"

"To-night, of course not — in the morning I shall, but it will be no use I tell you, I know it. You heard Pandolfi say that the bank is absolutely cleaned out."

"Well, God help us both," cried Richard, with despair and anger in his voice. "God pity us, that's all I can say."

"Nina said to-day that she would marry me," Geoffrey went on after a moment, "and it is more than likely that her father's failure will leave her as destitute as it does me. Do you suppose, knowing that, that I have time to think about my own troubles? Knowing what hers are? Do you suppose that I have time for anything now except to think how I can best earn money to take care of her? And isn't there something well worth while about it too, if I can say to myself — here I've got this thing to do and I'm going to do it?"

Richard looked at him with an expression in which pity and contempt were mingled. "My dear Geoffrey," he said, "you're a fool."

"Am I?" replied Geoffrey, "perhaps! But let me tell you one thing. You said the other day that to people like you and me, money is necessary — I say it isn't — I say in spite of the probability of my having lost everything, I've never been so happy as I am to-night — never looked at life so courageously, never knew what it was to understand that life could have a special meaning. And if someone had told me that it would,

cost me every penny to feel as I do now, to realize what life really means, I would have given it —”

Richard had lighted a cigarette and thrown himself sullenly on a sofa.

“I’ll give you six months,” he said at last, “and in the mean time what am *I* to do? Life has developed no new meaning for me. To me it means one thing — life.”

“I’m sorry, Richard, much more sorry for you than for myself, but listen — I have some money in my bank — I haven’t always spent everything, and there’s about thirty thousand dollars there, I should think. I’ll give you half. Is that a bargain? And with that we’ll start again — by the way, what time is it?” He too took out his watch and consulting it, looked at Richard in consternation. “It’s quarter past eight — I can’t have them to-night, Dick, it doesn’t seem right somehow — to-night —”

“Can you get word to them now?”

“I don’t know where to find the men, I might get the women at their theaters.”

“Then why stop it,” said Richard, “it’s your last night.”

Goeffrey was silent — yes, this was his last night, his old life was over — a feeling almost of regret assailed him for a moment — what harm to have them. They had been friends in their way. They had had many pleasant evenings together. Would it be decent for him to tell them not to come at the last moment, when he intended not to see them again? What harm

to have them for the last time? And Doris — she had promised to come — must he not see her any more either? — he half sighed — he supposed not — poor little Doris, but just once at least to put himself straight with her. He jumped to his feet.

“All right, Dick, we’ll have them, it’s for the last time, and now dress, dress quickly — we will dine somewhere together. We are all to meet at Davenport’s after the theaters are out and come here later.”

## CHAPTER VII

IN the meantime Storey and Martel in the former's car had gone straight to Davidge's house. A group of reporters stood on the pavement and an officer coming out of the door, touched his hat to Storey as he ascended the steps. Martel remained in the car.

Inside, the atmosphere of the house seemed to reflect the ruin that had befallen it, although nothing was changed. A dubious dejection reigned, mournful and at the same time ominous. An old housekeeper came in and announced that Miss Mary Davidge was prostrated by the news and could see no one, but on Storey's stating his message, she disappeared, returning to say that Miss Davidge would try to go later.

"But that is most indefinite," Storey answered. "I am going back to Mrs. Aladine's at once. Ask Miss Davidge to say when Miss Nina may expect her."

"Miss Davidge says that she will get up as soon as she can," the housekeeper reported after a considerable delay.

"Is she ill?" Storey demanded with a gesture of impatience.

"No, sir, but she is in bed and her door is locked."

"But the children shouldn't be left here, where are they?"

"In the nursery, sir."

"Get them at once, I will take them with me."

Madeline and Humphrey came in after further delay, dressed for the street, looking scared and mystified. They realized that something dreadful had happened but what it was they could not understand. One of those things which happen to grown people, which is beyond their range of experience, which they accept without question and soon forget.

Children with their instinctive knowledge of the essential things in the characters of others, are curiously indifferent to physical ugliness. That is unessential to them. They go deeper. And Storey had always been a favorite with them.

"Come along," he said in his strong voice, "we are going to see your sister," and smiling trustfully, they got into the car.

"Tell Miss Davidge," he said to the servant, "that I have taken the children to Mrs. Aladine's," and as they moved off he broke into a hearty laugh. "She will not stay there now," he added, "alone with the servants."

"Will you come home with me for a few minutes," Martel said after they had left Mrs. Aladine's again. "I should like to ask you something." Upon reaching his house, he assisted Storey from the car and preceeding him up the steps, ushered him into the hall. A large old fashioned room paved with squares of black and white marble.

A sound of weeping was heard as they entered — Lucus, Martel's little boy, five years old, stood sobbing

dismally, while his sister, two years older, seemed to be searching his pockets.

"What is the matter?" said Storey going up to them.

Lucus stopped suddenly, staring with open mouth as if in wonder at such a huge man, but Helen knew Storey well and smiling up at him, her short skirts swaying to and fro, she answered in a shrill voice:

"I was looking for his pocket handkerchief—he won't wipe his nose and nurse says that's a nasty trick."

Storey laughed heartily. "Perhaps he hasn't one," he said, drawing a silver dollar from his pocket, "so here is something to buy one with."

"I have many pocket handkerchiefs," Lucus answered in a loud distinct voice.

"Then you may buy anything you like with it."

Lucus stood smiling, first at the dollar and then at Storey, until suddenly he turned and shouting something excitedly, he began running round and round the hall, his sister close at his heels, both seemingly engaged in the performance of some game intelligible only to themselves. Their cries and the clattering of their shoes on the marble floor, made a deafening racket.

"Where is Therese?" Martel demanded irritably of the English servant who had opened the door for them. "They should not be allowed to make such a noise downstairs, take them to the nursery at once, it's time they were in bed," and turning quickly he led the way

into his study, pausing however to say "Bring scotch and cigars."

Storey sat down in a large easy chair and waited.

Martel paced restlessly up and down, avoiding his eye.

The servant appeared.

"Has Mrs. Martel come in?"

"Not yet, sir."

Martel opened the box of cigars.

"Not these! not these," he exclaimed in the same irritable manner, "the perfectos, you know the kind I smoke."

"Excuse me, sir," answered the servant, "I will fetch them directly."

When he had finally gone, closing the door after him, Martel filled the glasses, gave one to Storey, provided him with a cigar, lighted his own which he put down at once and did not take up again, and then looking him squarely in the face, with his intensely blue eyes, he said almost harshly:

"Vincent, I need money."

"How much?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars."

Storey gave him a quick searching look and remained silent.

"Yes, I could let you have it," he said finally, "but let me ask you—"

Martel held up his hand as if to stop him.

"No, that isn't what I mean," he said. "I want to

sell some of my securities, I have no intention of borrowing."

"Let me ask you, Charles," Storey repeated, "have you been speculating?"

"I?" answered Martel, looking at him in surprise.

"This is not then to provide for some unexpected demand — some loss?"

"I have run behind," answered Martel, "that's all. I have been running behind for years, living beyond my means."

"Now listen," said Storey. "Davidge's failure may be only the beginning of trouble, you may not be able to sell your securities without sacrificing them, give them to me as collateral and let me lend it to you. You have never been in business, you know nothing about making money, therefore hold to what you have. Your money is well invested, don't touch it. Once begin encroaching on your capital, and God knows where you will end. Let me lend it to you. From time to time, as you feel able, you can pay it back."

Martel remained for a moment looking mournfully at the floor. "No," he said at last, "I would never be able to."

"But you have sixty thousand a year — go abroad for five years, let both your houses, sell the 'Phryne,'" said Storey, referring to a schooner yacht, the apple of Martel's eye.

"I sold her six months ago," answered Martel. "You know my wife hates the water."

He sat silent again, still looking at the floor.

“No,” he repeated at last, as if to himself. “I should never be able to.”

Suddenly he rose to his feet, an expression of fury distorted his features. “Yes!” he exclaimed, “it is as you say, God knows where it will end. All! all will go, fortune, name, everything, all, all!” Then looking quickly at Storey as if surprised at his own intensity, he sat down and said in a calm voice: “Vincent, I am going to confide to you, something I have told no living soul—I feel that I must—the thought of it is with me night and day—I must tell you.”

He rose again, went to the door, looked out, closed and locked it. When he resumed his seat, Storey saw that his face now wore a look of agony, as if he were dwelling on memories intolerably painful to him. He drew a deep breath and Storey could see that his muscular hands were gripping the arms of his chair tightly.

“All men, Vincent,” he said at last, “marry for one reason, the wish for physical possession. They would not admit this to you—sometimes they do not even know it, but it is true, and it was for this that I too married—and *I* did not know. You remember her, you know how beautiful she is, and how much more beautiful she was then? The idea of possessing her, filled me with feelings of awe, of tenderness. Often when thinking of the inscrutable ways of God, in giving me a wife so beautiful, so good, so beautiful, so perfect, so beautiful, always beautiful you see, I prayed that I might be in a measure worthy of her—because—she was beautiful.”

Martel paused again, breathed deeply and went on. "But while satiety, weariness or indifference follow most marriages, love followed mine — on my part — No! men do not marry for love. They marry because their wives seem beautiful to them — they learn to love — or to hate — afterwards — I learned to love, at first —

"Well, we married and I took her abroad. Her father, who had been a physician with a small practice, had found it difficult even to give her an education such as he wished, and she had, up to this time, seen nothing of life, knew nothing of it, and it pleased me to show it to her."

A nervous smile distorted his lips. He got up, walked the length of the room and back, and resuming his seat, went on:

"She was mine you see — and she had been poor — I would shower money on her — be her Maecenas, teach her how people with money live — How well my beauty learned her lesson!"

Storey was amazed as he listened. Martel, a man of few words, and with no gift of language, was expressing himself with a lucidity, an ease which he could not have given him credit for — it seemed as if in brooding over his troubles, he had acquired a vocabulary wherewith to give expression to them.

"But I was content at first. Proud of the manners and graces of the world which she acquired so easily — of her beauty which attracted notice — because I possessed it — proud of her faculty in learning the lesson it had pleased me to teach, the lesson of life

as we know it, until finally I realized that she had developed an appetite for it, without restraint, without moderation, voracious of pleasure, insatiable. That is why I need money, Storey, my debts are pressing —”

Martel stopped and there was a long silence, but Storey felt that he had not finished. At length he began again.

“I remonstrated with her and we quarreled, the first of many. We grew farther and farther apart and then — a certain man came —”

He drew one of those deep labored breaths and his face assumed again that look of suffering which Storey had noticed before.

“A certain man came; and I forgave her.” He stopped again and looked at Storey for the first time since he had begun speaking. “Forgive me,” he said, “for talking so long — but it is hard, hard to tell.”

Storey made a gesture of assent.

“I forgave her,” he repeated in the same mournful voice, “on certain conditions. This man was to be dismissed absolutely and completely — and I demanded of her a circumspection of conduct which she must follow unwaveringly. She promised. She was frightened and sincerely remorseful, I think, but whether she has kept her promise, I do not know. I did not want to know and yet — I wanted to — I was afraid to know and yet — I doubted. What an intolerable situation, and in all these years, I have never known, would never try to know, because I was afraid — afraid that I could not stand the knowledge of a second — a second —”

Martel could not go on.

"To-day, I was crossing Fifth Avenue, when she passed me in her car, and with her was the man she had promised never to see. Neither noticed me. What caused me to go to Mrs. Aladine's, I cannot tell, but I went, and they were there. There are to be reprisals now. She has broken her promise and she shall pay if I can make her, to the uttermost farthing. She shall not have one penny of my money, if I can prevent it, nor the children. Will you help me, Storey? Just what I intend to do, I cannot tell yet, but she would like my money and she shall not get it, she would like my children and she shall not have them. Will you try to keep her from them if I show you good reasons why she should not have them?"

"Will I try?"

"I mean that life is so uncertain. If I should give you reasons — good reasons, for doing so, would you carry out my wishes if I should not be here?"

Storey, man of many responsibilities, hesitated.

"I would do what I could, Charles," he answered at length.

Martel held out his hand — a weight seemed to have been lifted from his mind. He knew that that answer of Storey's meant much.

"Thank you, Vincent," he said simply.

Then he did an unwonted thing, he smiled — the bitter lines about his mouth disappeared and Storey saw that he was looking at a different man; a man with a very sweet, honest and simple nature.

## CHAPTER VIII

DAVIDGE, until five years before, had been a man of dependable and honest qualities. He was typical of that solid but unimaginative class who are scrupulously orderly in their dealings with themselves and others. He read nothing but the newspapers, discounted his bills, and went to sleep at the opera. He was a good husband, proud of his wife because she was his, loved his children and had a strong conviction that the head of the banking business of Davidge & Co., was a person of some importance. He was affectionate, kindly, shrewd, unintelligent and vain.

But after the death of his wife, a change began to take place in Davidge's character. He seemed to be dropping a little below the level of life, as he had always lived it. He became a shade less particular about his person. His expression changed slightly. He grew slowly into habits of self indulgence which had been quite foreign to his nature—he was undergoing some subtle deterioration—but very gradually. Gradually the old Davidge was disappearing, but so slowly, that it was not until the transformation was complete, that his family realized that a new Davidge had taken the place of the other—a man given to debauchery, dissipation, brutality and anger.

The history of insanity can show many such cases. A man of strong domestic tastes will leave his family and refuse to see or support them. An extraordinarily fastidious man, seemingly the victim of an unusually vindictive providence, has been known to marry his cook. A refined and studious man will become a libertine; all victims of some mysterious physiological alteration of the brain whereby they become other people.

The shock that Pandolfi's announcement had given Nina, was not caused by any feeling of affection for her father. That, with liking even or respect, had gone long since, but by the realization that it meant disgrace and ruin. It had plunged her into a chaos of uncertainty in which nothing could be distinguished which might serve as a sign to guide her forward. That she had thought of the possibility of such a disaster, was shown by her instantaneous realization of its significance and by her calmness after the first few moments. What her father's fate might be, did not interest her in the least. She hoped that he had gone out of her life forever and her only feeling toward him was one of increased resentment for this crowning disgrace in a long chapter of ignominy.

Constance was shocked at first by Nina's composure and by certain contemptuous references to her father, until the latter noticing it, told her the story which until now pride had prevented her from telling anyone, revealing one of those hidden dramas which are being

enacted around us, perhaps by those most dear to us, without our knowledge.

At ten o'clock, a note came from Aunt Mary — "Don't go to bed," it said. "I shall be there soon."

At half past eleven, Nina heard a cab drive up, and after a short delay Aunt Mary appeared in the little boudoir in which she was sitting. She carried a small black bag. She was greatly excited.

"Your jewels, your mother's and mine," she announced, holding it up. "There's that much saved anyway. I was afraid someone would take them away from me. If that odious Mr. Storey hadn't acted so disgracefully, dragging me out of bed the way he did, I would have asked him to slip out with them in his pocket. But perhaps it was just as well. They say you never can tell about these Wall Street men, and we might never have seen them again."

"Dragging you out of bed?"

"Well not that exactly; don't be so literal; but he took the children away and I should have been afraid to stay there all alone." Suddenly her face became distorted, as if she were about to burst into tears. "Isn't it frightful, such a disgrace?" She threw her arms around Nina's neck, but almost at once the latter was startled to hear her aunt's loud masculine voice close to her ear, call to Jacob, who had brought her upstairs and who was just leaving the room:

"Here, shut that door after you, will you!"

Nina disengaged herself.

"There is nothing to cry about," she said coldly.

"I hope that I shall never see him again — that is almost worth the disgrace, the humiliation of it — the thought that I shall never, never see him again. But is everything gone; has he ruined himself and us completely?"

"Well, I have a little, thank God," Aunt Mary answered. "I never would let him have my money to take care of, although he suggested it more than once, and then of course your income of five thousand a year was in other hands, so that's safe." She leaned close to Nina and speaking in a whisper said:

"He was at the house this afternoon."

"At the house?"

"Yes; he came and packed a valise and went away again — he was like a crazy man. Most of the time scarcely coherent, he said first that he was going to give himself up, then that he was going away to make money and pay everybody, and finally that he would kill himself. He frightened me."

"Do you think that he would do that?" asked Nina, scornfully. "I don't. I suppose I ought to feel sorry for him, Aunt Mary, but I can't," Nina said slowly. "For a long time I have felt that something like this would happen — but I can't feel sorry for him — you know what father was like?"

"Know him! How that man changed — it's insanity, I tell you, that's what it is."

"It was bad habits, dissipation, neglect of duties. I wonder how he could have gone on as long as he has without other people finding him out?"

"It's insanity, I tell you," reiterated Aunt Mary, vehemently, "it's in the family. Did you never hear of your Aunt Ann?" And on Nina's answering in the negative, she went on with that air of satisfaction which old people assume when indulging in reminiscences. "How well I remember, it was years ago and people have forgotten it. We were all young then and lived in Pearl Street—I had gone to church to a rehearsal of the choir; things were very different in those days, and I had left your Aunt Ann at home. Well, I asked the others in afterwards, to have some cake and sherry, and when we got to the house, we all went into the drawing-room, and what do you suppose—there was your Aunt Ann sitting in an easy chair without any clothing on whatever, reading a novel!"

"Aunt Mary!" cried Nina.

"Without any clothing on whatever. The only man in the party, Mr. Page, the organist, had a weak heart and fainted away, and Miss Ann was packed off to Bloomingdale—she was stark staring mad—Not insanity indeed!

"Yes, most of the time he was almost unintelligible, he frightened me. But I must say that he seemed really sorry about Mr. Goeffrey's money. Every once in a while in the midst of his incoherent ravings, he would speak of Mr. Goeffrey and then suddenly he would be quite rational again. Your father and Mr. Goeffrey's father had been life long friends, and the fact that he had not been true to the trust that had been given him, seemed to make him desperate. He

seemed to think more of this than anything, and oh!" she exclaimed, "where is it? Oh, here it is—he gave me a letter for Mr. Goeffrey. Do you know I had forgotten all about it—he said you must get this to Mr. Goeffrey at once, at once, do you understand, without a moment's delay? It is of the most vital importance, it may save his money for him."

"Aunt Mary," cried Nina again. "And that was hours ago."

"I'm sorry, I know I should have done something, but I forgot it until just now. What are you going to do?" For Nina had touched an electric bell.

"I hope Jacob is up yet," she answered. "How could you be so forgetful, when perhaps so much is at stake. It may be too late now. Oh, Jacob!" she exclaimed, as he appeared at the door. "I'm so glad you haven't gone to bed, will you see if you can get Mr. Hunter on the telephone—is there one on this floor?"

"In the room that used to be Mr. Aladine's office there is one, Miss Nina, but I am afraid that it is out of order—I will show you." And he led her to a small room looking on Fifth Avenue. As they entered, Jacob lighted a shaded lamp which hung suspended over a massive desk standing in the middle of the room. In the silence of the night, there was something oppressive about the atmosphere of this little office. With its rigid but costly severity, its single light flooding the enormous and ornate desk standing like a symbol of its former occupant, Aladine's spirit seemed

to pervade it and Nina almost fancied that she could see him sitting there as he used to, with his tense hawk-like face, before his massive desk, always quite bare of everything except a pad made of small oblong sheets of white paper on which he was forever making figures, always figures written in pencil, small, faint, almost illegible, as his cold emotionless voice gave its orders to the mouthpiece of the telephone.

Nina sat down at once and put the receiver to her ear, but no sound came.

"I am afraid it is out of order, Miss Nina," Jacob repeated. "I tried to get a message through for Mr. Storey this afternoon, but I couldn't, and no messages have come here to-day at all—a quantity of them have been affected by the storm."

"How provoking!" Nina exclaimed, petulantly. Each was speaking in a subdued voice. She moved the arm by which the receiver was suspended, rapidly up and down, hoping to attract the attention of the operator at the central office. "How provoking!" She waited again without result, Jacob standing motionless beside her. The house was very still and from the city only occasional distant sounds rose faintly to them, but in the receiver which Nina held tightly to her ear, there was silence, utter and profound, and as she held it there and became more and more aware of its dead, its complete stillness, it seemed to her she was listening into spaces lying beyond the confines of the world, remote, mysterious, and still under the influence of the personality which had pervaded this room, she

felt each moment as if she might hear Aladine's voice, cold but faint, speaking to her from out of some unknown, ghostly place.

She put back the receiver with a clatter and hurried into the corridor. "Jacob," she said, "I have a letter for Mr. Hunter, which I must deliver at once, to-night, and as I can't tell him to come for it, I must take it myself."

"But I can take it, Miss Nina."

"No, I must take it myself, but I should like you to come with me. Will you call a cab?"

"But the telephone, ma'am, we use it even for Mrs. Aladine's garage —"

"Of course, I had forgotten; very well, we must walk then."

"Perhaps we shall meet a cab, although it is quite late," answered Jacob.

As he spoke, Mrs. Aladine came out of her room, and on hearing Nina's explanation of her dilemma, she exclaimed:

"I will go too! You mustn't think of going alone. I will get ready at once."

Nina went back to the boudoir and began putting on her hat. Her aunt looked up in astonishment.

"You are not going out?"

"I am going to take Goeffrey's letter to him."

"Why don't you tell him to come for it?"

"The telephone is out of order," Nina answered shortly.

"You could wait until morning, I should think. He

can't do anything to-night." Aunt Mary took out her handkerchief and feeling that she was being silently blamed for her forgetfulness, prepared to put it to her eyes. "I really think Nina, that —"

"Oh, do be quiet," Nina interrupted vehemently, stamping her foot; "he must get it and I mean to take it to him. Don't make me more irritable than I am already."

She picked up her muff and collar, stopped for a moment again before the glass, and went out saying to her aunt:

"Constance and Jacob are going with me, you had better not wait."

Constance, Nina and the old servant paused for a moment under the great glass and iron marquee which covered the main entrance on the side street, as they went out. It seemed very late. A carriage stopped for a moment before a house further down; a group of people left it and ascended the steps. The door slammed and they heard the rapid concussion of the horses' hoofs as they moved away. An electric car rushed by on a neighboring Avenue, blazing with lights, and all was still again. It had grown colder. The night was calm and in the sky, which was fast clearing, a full moon rode above the clouds. As they reached the corner, no vehicle of any kind was in sight.

"Let us walk," said Constance, and they started south. The street was deserted, except for the solitary figure of a man, who several blocks in front of them, was walking so slowly that they rapidly overtook

him. As they came nearer, Nina, who had been looking at him intently, suddenly ran ahead calling, "Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Bancroft!"

Mr. Bancroft engaged in one of those nocturnal prowlings, which were a habit of his, turned at the sound of his name. If he was surprised at seeing them at this hour, he did not show it, and Constance explained at once their reason for calling him.

"Would it be too much trouble to go with us?" she concluded, "then I could send Jacob back."

"I take these walks every night for my health," answered Mr. Bancroft. "I am going in that direction and I shall have to come back in this to get home again, so that you will transform a disagreeable necessity into a pleasure."

"Very well, then," Constance responded. "You need not come with us, Jacob."

"And now let me make a suggestion," Mr. Bancroft said. "We will walk more rapidly and more easily, if you will each take an arm."

Mr. Bancroft spoke but little, and arm in arm, he walking with the slight tottering rigidity of old age, and they the personification of youth, passed street after street. The theaters must have been out long since, and as they reached the great hotels, they saw that the restaurants were dark and silent. Only at long intervals, a carriage or a motor sped by on its way uptown. On this deserted prospect, the moon poured a flood of pale light and the buildings rising dark and somber, seemed to stand humbly with huddled shoulders,

as if saying to the pale satellite above them, "How far above even us, thou art, how remote."

They still went on, but Mr. Bancroft's step was changing; feeling those youthful arms within his own, conscious of those elastic steps beside him, something of their life, their energy seemed to be finding its way into his veins, his gait lost its heaviness, he too began to walk with a buoyancy almost youthful. From time to time he glanced at their faces beside him and from them to the moon riding above; and the quiet street, the contact of these women young and beautiful, the calm moon raining down its flood of silver light, woke in him memories long sleeping. He seemed almost young again.

"My dear," he said to Nina, in his thin and precise voice, "you have had a hard blow to-day, and you will have others. But you still have that which no man can take from you, and which is worth all the rest. Do you know what it is?"

"It seems as if I had nothing," said Nina.

"You have youth," he answered.

"But of what value is youth without the means to enjoy it," she thought. Davidge throughout the development of that slow process which was destroying his brain, never lost sight of the importance of his position and that of his family, and even toward the last when hard put to it for money, he had always maintained an opulent manner of life. It seemed as if in return for their coöperation in hiding his vices, he had wished to deny them nothing, and Nina had been

brought up in utter disregard of the value of money. She had had what she wanted and her father had paid. Once, however, when temporarily embarrassed, he had reprimanded her sharply for her extravagance, she had realized with a shock of apprehension, that here was a different situation from any that she had known before, that it was possible to not always have money, and it was from that time, that she had begun to dread a catastrophe such as had taken place. It was this that had frightened her, and now her fears had been realized in a way terribly definite and conclusive. Her former life was at an end, and she knew how to live no other, had no wish to, and Goeffrey's condition was the same. She was taking this letter to him with the desperate hope that it would result in bettering their fortunes, but if it did not, there seemed to be nothing ahead, no future except one which was quite impossible.

She was deeply absorbed in her thoughts, when her attention was attracted to a motor cab which passed them rapidly, going down the avenue. It seemed crowded with people and songs, laughter and joyous cries issued from within it. Three others followed it swiftly, but the last, after going a short distance, stopped at the curb, waited for a man to descend from it, and then went on again. The man walked rapidly back to meet them and as he approached them, Nina saw that it was Pandolfi. A coat lined with sable and with a sable collar, covered his evening clothes. He too, concealed any feeling of surprise he might have

felt at seeing them, and after he had greeted them and they had walked on together, Nina found herself by his side, the others having dropped a little behind.

"I saw you, as I was on my way home," he said to her, speaking in a low rapid tone. "I have been so distressed, that I should have been the means of causing you pain to-day. You know of course that I was quite ignorant of you being there?"

"Of course," answered Nina, indifferently, "that is understood."

"And I was still more distressed at something Hunter told me afterwards, that you are engaged."

"It is true," Nina said.

"And I am distressed. Do you know that he is ruined?"

"Perhaps," answered Nina, "I am not sure."

"It is most difficult for me to mention it — under the circumstances," answered Pandolfi. "You will readily understand why, but I felt that I should let you know."

Nina looked at him with that air of hauteur, she knew so well how to assume.

"Are you telling me this because you think that Goeffrey will try to conceal it from me?"

Pandolfi shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands. The cruel southern nature looked out for a moment and was gone again.

"I am rebuffed," he said, "you are right. It is something that does not concern me, and I have no right to mention it."

"That is why I am on my way to see him now," Nina answered, before she realized that she was committing an indiscretion perhaps.

"To see him now?" repeated Pandolfi in amazement, stopping short according to his wont, but going on again instantly.

"Yes, we are on our way there. Something has made it very necessary for me to see him at once, something that may help him."

"He is not there," Pandolfi answered. "I left him a few minutes ago."

"Then I shall wait for him," said Nina simply.

Pandolfi hesitated for the fraction of a second — "Then let me suggest this," he returned. "My quarters are in the same house as you know, let me offer them to you until he comes. With Mrs. Aladine and Mr. Bancroft," he added, "I am sure no one could object."

Nina did not answer at once and he went on.

"There is no waiting room there and you would be much more comfortable I am sure. In addition I should consider that you had forgiven me for causing you pain this afternoon, and for what you thought I insinuated about Hunter, just now."

Nina turned and waited for the others.

"I am so sorry," she said as they came up, "that I asked you to come with me. Goeffrey may be very late, Mr. Pandolfi says, but I *must* see him. Mr. Pandolfi has very kindly asked us to wait in his rooms until

Goeffrey comes"— and she looked at Constance interrogatively.

To Constance's conventionally regulated life, the affair was almost assuming the complexion of an adventure. She was eager to see what that strange retreat a bachelor's apartment was like.

"It is very kind of Mr. Pandolfi," she said, "let us accept by all means," and going on again they presently turned down a side street on which stood the Kenworthy, their destination. As they went in, a small man with a Jewish cast of features spoke to Pandolfi, who answered:

"I will be down again in a moment," and he ushered them into the elevator.

That strange curiosity which women feel for the habitations of unmarried men, and which they almost always invest with a vague atmosphere, of secret and romantic dissipation, caused Constance and Nina to look at the room into which Pandolfi had shown them, with interest. It revealed its occupant to be a man of luxurious habits, but of bizarre taste, and they retained afterwards only a confused impression of surroundings heavily sensuous, of rugs that were too thick, furniture too richly covered, of velvet curtains too extravagantly draped, of a variety of costly and yet tasteless ornaments; and of paintings in staring gilt frames, purchased without knowledge or appreciation. The environment of a man with money, but without cultivation or refinement.

As soon as they had seated themselves, Pandolfi asked to be excused. "A business acquaintance has been waiting to see me," he explained, "on a rather important matter, but I shall not be long. The moment Goeffrey gets here, I will let you know."

He went out, closing the door after him. After nearly an hour, he came back again.

"Goeffrey is here at last," he announced, "and asks if you will please come to his rooms. He has gone up to see if they are presentable."

## CHAPTER IX

A VERY few minutes after Pandolfi had joined Constance, Nina and Mr. Bancroft, four motor cabs turning into a cross street from that portion of Fifth Avenue now given over to shops, approached the Kenworthy Chambers. As the first of these vehicles stopped before the entrance, the door burst open as if from considerable pressure, and six persons, three women and three men, among whom were Richard and Goeffrey, disengaged themselves with difficulty and descended to the sidewalk. Seeming quite oblivious of the attention they attracted from the few passersby, they gazed nonchalantly at the sky, the opposite houses, the cabs or the façade of the Kenworthy for a moment, and then as if moved by a common impulse, turned, ascended the steps and entered.

The second motor was occupied by Doris and a tall shapely blonde, who looked quite bored and ill tempered.

"If they go up without waiting for us I'll go home," said the latter.

"Oh Irma, please," replied Doris, "you'll spoil Goeffrey's party."

The third cab had but one occupant. As the door opened a tall slender young man with rather long blond

hair, emerged. Although he seemed to be slightly intoxicated, he tried to walk with a fashionable air, bending forward elegantly from the waist. The night wind blowing his black trousers about, displayed the outlines of his thin calves. Instead of following the others, he waited the approach of the fourth cab, and as it stopped he seized the handle and with a loud laugh opened the door.

The cab was empty.

The young man stared with astonishment into its recesses, pulled his high hat down tightly on his head, looked hurriedly up and down the street, and quickly running to Doris and Irma, who were just entering the building, he cried:

"Pandolfi is not in his cab!"

Doris and Irma stopped for a moment in amazement and then running to the rest of the party, who were waiting for the elevator, exclaimed:

"Pandolfi is not in his cab!"

All turned in consternation and then in a body passed out of the building, descended the steps and approached the cab, each in turn peering into it and conjecturing as to the cause of this strange disappearance.

"Perhaps he wanted to walk."

"Pandolfi never walks if he can help it."

"Perhaps he has fallen out."

"But both the doors were shut," answered Davenport, the young man who had made the discovery.

"He didn't intend to come," said Irma angrily, whose

irritation, for some reason, seemed to be increasing — “well come along, we don’t need him.”

“The gentleman said that he would see you later,” the chauffeur suddenly explained in a rough voice.

“Well, why didn’t you say so before, you fool?” said Irma, angrier than ever, “instead of keeping us out here to freeze,” and she moved once more toward the entrance. The others followed.

The chauffeur, a short burly man with a red face, looked indignantly at the retreating group and then cried out insolently:

“Whose going to pay me?”

“Go to the devil,” responded Irma’s clear full voice.

At this the four chauffeurs descended hastily. The burly red faced man was leading and advancing close to Irma, he said in a sneering insolent tone:

“I know you — you don’t pay for anything — not when you’ve got someone to do it for you.”

Irma gave him the look of a tigress and seemed ready to spring at him, when Davenport interrupted in a conciliatory tone, saying:

“Now, now, my man, we don’t want any trouble.”

“Who’s talking to you?” the chauffeur answered, so threateningly that Davenport ran quickly up the steps — and going close to Irma he repeated again, with an indescribable leer:

“Not when you’ve got someone to do it for you.”

But a new actor now appeared in this little drama. Glevin, the third man in the first motor, came quickly down the steps. He was twenty-five perhaps, short, and

with closely cut blond hair. He was clean shaven with a hard, almost brutal face. He had a thick neck and his shoulders were very broad. Tearing off his overcoat quickly, he threw it to Davenport, brushed past Irma and seizing the chauffeur by the shoulder, he whirled him away from her without apparent effort, but with such force that he spun twice around before coming to a stop and standing with his face close to the chauffeur's he said, looking him straight in the eye:

"Say that again, will you!—"

The chauffeur, knowing his man, hesitated, and for a moment there was silence. The women frightened and yet fascinated, drew away without, however, being able to avert their gaze. Goeffrey and Richard had come down and were standing close to Glevin, furious at being involved in such a disgraceful scene. Two or three servants from the Kenworthy came out and a number of passersby had assembled to see the outcome of the altercation.

Glevin went still closer to the chauffeur and pressed against him compelling him to give way a step.

"Say that again," he repeated.

The chauffeur, his face distorted with impotent rage, remained silent.

Twice more Glevin repeated this maneuver and twice the chauffeur gave way. There was something pitiless about Glevin's action, pitiless and repulsive. He seemed determined to goad the man into a fight and all felt instinctively, the chauffeur perhaps better than any, that he stood no chance with Glevin, that his punishment

would be quick and merciless. Glevin was too sure of himself, knew his powers too well, was too anxious to display them.

At this moment a little withered man, a German, one of the other chauffeurs, pulled timidly at Glevin's sleeve:

"Please, gentleman," he said, holding his hat in his hand and speaking with a strong accent, "he yoost wants his money."

"I thought he wanted to fight," said Glevin tauntingly; "well, which is it? Do you want to fight or do you want your money."

The chauffeur scowling at him, backed away and walked slowly toward his cab without answering.

"Gentleman," repeated the old German, "he yoost wants his money." He looked at Glevin appealingly and finally smiled, but so dubiously, displaying a toothless mouth, that Irma began to laugh, at which the old chauffeur's mouth opened still wider and repeating, "he yoost wants his money," he too began in the cracked falsetto of old age, until a general sound of laughter arose; nods and winks were exchanged among the bystanders who began to disperse and Glevin taking his coat from Davenport — who seeing that peace had been restored, had come down the steps again — put it on.

"Pay these men," said Goeffrey to one of the servants. "I hope supper isn't cold," and he started up the steps once more, followed by the others.

"Vell! good night," called out the old chauffeur.

For some reason everyone laughed again at this and Goeffrey and his companions went into the Kenworthy

in excellent humor which increased into a general hilarity. All crowded into the elevator and as it ascended, a confused hubbub of singing and laughter resounded, above which could be heard the voice of the elevator attendant repeating:

“Please, gentlemen, please, this is against the rules.”

At the fourteenth story, the door was pushed back with a clang and men and women walked rapidly to Goeffrey's apartment, admission to which was given at once by Waters who had been waiting anxiously for them.

Davenport, because Glevin had tickled his neck, came out of the elevator last of all laughing immoderately. Stooping over and resting his hands on his knees, he burst into a violent fit of coughing. Finally reaching the door and finding that it had been locked from within, he burst into fresh paroxysms of laughter — seeming to find something extraordinarily funny in this proceeding, until finally he was admitted.

These parties given occasionally at the rooms of various men, had a fascination for Goeffrey, who in the social intercourse of the more conventional kind, often noticed a self consciousness which seemed extremely provincial to him. Here at least they were themselves. The women, all actresses, and all favorites on the metropolitan stage, stars of lesser magnitude — were provincial too, to an extent, but they were not troubled by self consciousness, and there was a breezy inconsequence about them, a verve and a quickness of wit, expressed in language unconventional and picturesque which

amused him greatly. They lived too hard, slept too little and smoked too many cigarettes, but they were not vulgar and any mention of their love affairs, even if they were perfectly well known, was strictly tabooed. Although someone was sure to get drunk at these parties, it was always one of the men. The women possessed a natural vivacity which needed no stimulus and they drank little.

But of them all he liked Doris the best. In her beautiful but sullen face, her musical and perfectly modulated voice, her daring elegance of manner and dress, there was a manifest superiority which the other women accepted, and yet strangely enough did not resent, probably because of her obvious sincerity and kindness of heart. Beside the rather boisterous give and take of the other women, there was a refinement about her which was in striking contrast to them. Although she lived their life, she seemed to belong to another class. Once when some rather outrageous conduct had been indulged in, she had disappeared and they had found that she had slipped quietly away.

The supper was well under way, Waters serving it with his accustomed dexterity, and Richard had left the table to play something for them in response to a general request. Aside from the candles on the table and a few shaded lamps, there were no lights in the room, and in the far corner where he was seated, his shirt front made a white blur above the grand piano, emerging from the shadow and receding again as he drew on the cigarette which he still held between his

lips. Goeffrey had noticed that Doris, who sat next to him, was unusually quiet.

"What is it," he asked her. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing much," she answered, "but Glevin frightened me; I hate violence so, of any kind, it makes me feel weak; but I shall be all right again presently," and lifting her champagne glass, she drank some of its contents. They were speaking in an undertone, as the others had stopped talking for a moment to listen to the piano, and Richard was playing with a rather exaggerated expression but in soft tones, giving the impression of music heard at a distance, some of those ephemeral airs, half sad, half lively, which appear in every capital and which like the units of that gay life of which they are the product and the expression, have their brief vogue and are forgotten. One of the women was singing softly in a clear, fresh voice.

"Doris," said Goeffrey, "will you forgive me for what I said the other day, and will you believe me when I say that I am really and truly sorry and that I am heartily ashamed of myself?"

Doris was turning her champagne glass round and round, she did not look up.

"Of course I forgive you, Goeffrey. I knew that you would regret it, and I regret showing my vexation — but you hurt me. That was the sort of thing one might expect of Glevin, but not of you."

He felt that that responsiveness which had developed so rapidly in her since he had first met her, was lacking.

There was some mental reservation there which made a complete resumption of their old friendship impossible. He had gone down in her estimation too far to be able to regain his position by a mere apology.

"I know," he answered disappointedly, "but are we still friends?"

"Still friends, Goeffrey."

"I am glad, Doris, because everything will be so different now, that perhaps I shall not see you any more —"

She turned quickly to him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that my old life is over."

"But how, Goeffrey? I don't understand."

"Do you remember my saying that the reason I did not get commissions, was because it wasn't necessary? It is necessary now."

"Why now more than then?"

"Because there has been a failure and my money is gone. Do you remember telling me that you were worried about me; about Pandolfi and Davidge? Well, Davidge is ruined, he has run away."

The news had an extraordinary effect on her. She half rose from her chair as if looking for some means of escape, and at the same time an expression of helpless fury, of rage, swept across her face.

"Oh, Goeffrey, it is too terrible."

"What did you mean the other day, by being worried, what had you heard?"

Doris put her hands to her throat as if it were hard

for her to breathe. She did not answer for a moment and then she said, speaking hurriedly:

"Nothing, except that I knew that Ernesto and Mr. Davidge were friends — I knew that Mr. Davidge was a dissipated man — it did not seem to me that that kind of man should be trusted with other people's money; and yet from what Ernesto had said about you and his daughter, I did not feel as if I could tell you about him. I thought that you might think that I was jealous of your friendship with her. It wasn't true of course — that I was jealous — and I should have spoken."

"It would have made no difference," said Goeffrey.

"But I'm so — so sorry, Goeffrey — and must you give up all your beautiful things — these beautiful rooms?"

"I suppose so and my old life," answered Goeffrey.

Truly it seemed hard to have to give it up. He looked about him as he spoke, at the rich background of the room, the table with its covering of crimson silk in the candles' light; and the women — Blanche and Louise, dark and vivacious, Pauline, dark too, but younger and more appealing, Irma, tall, shapely and blond, with her small straight nose and full round chin, and Doris, more beautiful than all, and about each something which suggested those airs which Richard was playing as if from a distance; gay, with an undercurrent of unconscious ennui — ephemeral and fleeting.

The partial intoxication which had shown itself on their arrival in the cabs, had been dissipated by the excitement of Glevin's encounter with the chauffeur and

all now drank freely; Waters, dexterously and without obtrusion, replenishing each glass before it was empty, coöperating earnestly to produce the necessary exhilaration. Conversation became noisier and more general. Irma, brandishing her white arms above the table, gave an imitation for which she was famous and at which everybody laughed heartily. Davenport, putting his head in his plate, luckily a fresh one, and giving way to unbridled mirth — always more easily affected than the others, was rapidly getting very drunk. Blanche and Louise contributed to the general hilarity by singing a duet in which they were to appear together in a new musical comedy and going through some cleverly ridiculous business which they were working up for it. Davenport with his head still in his plate, laughed more than ever.

“Shut up, will you,” remonstrated Irma, “we can’t hear anything.”

Suddenly a shout arose, Pandolfi had come into the room. He explained his disappearance by saying that he had seen someone in the street as he was passing in the cab, whom he was most anxious to have a word with.

“And by the way,” he said to Goeffrey, “a friend stopped in for a moment and I brought him up — Mr. Hunter, Mr. Eckstein.”

A small Jew advanced obsequiously and after shaking hands with Goeffrey seated himself at one corner of the table in a chair Waters brought up; Pandolfi taking the place which had been left vacant for him. The Jew

was known to some of the women, for he exchanged greetings with them as he looked about smilingly, plainly delighted at having fallen in with such pleasant company. The general sense of hilarity and good fellowship was at its height. Although everyone had smoked cigarettes straight through, Pauline now took from a case which hung at her waist, a long thin cigar and lighted it at one of the candles, and Waters, who had just served coffee, passed others of a larger and stronger variety to the men. Blue tendrils of smoke twisted lazily in the air, and the crimson glow from the cloth flushed the faces and seemed to accentuate the audaciously elegant costumes of the women.

"By the way, Goeffrey," said Glevin suddenly, during a lull in the conversation, "didn't Davidge look after your money?"

"He did," Goeffrey answered. "Worse luck."

"My God! but that's bad," returned Glevin. "That's hard luck."

"My! My!" exclaimed Eckstein, who until now had spoken only to Louise at his right and Pandolfi at his left—"that's too bad. They say he squandered everything."

"What's the matter, has Goeffrey lost some money?" asked Pauline.

"If Davidge had it, ten to one he's lost it all," answered Glevin.

Goeffrey at the head of the table saw that they were all looking at him curiously, a fusillade of questions were fired at him—the moment seemed ripe for a dra-

matic climax and the idea came into his head that he would make them a little speech and say good-by.

He stood up and raised his glass.

"Yes, I've lost it all. Wish me good luck."

All raised their glasses and drank. Cries of "Good luck, good luck, cheer up, Goeffrey, we'll help you," were heard, hands were held out to him and those nearest patted him sympathetically on the back. Only Doris, after she had drunk with the others, sat quietly in her chair — a smile on her face which was perilously close to tears, if anyone had noticed.

"Speech, speech," called Davenport, who seemed to think the whole thing a joke. Seizing a pack of cards lying on a table which had been arranged for poker, he put it on the top of Goeffrey's head whence it slipped in a shower to the table.

"Stop it, will you, Davenport."

"Shut up."

"Sit down," was heard and Glevin pulled him into his chair.

Goeffrey laughed in a queer embarrassed way. Putting his hands on the table to steady himself, he had been drinking freely in spite of Doris's protestations, he began.

"Yes. I'm afraid that everything will be rather different now. To tell the truth I didn't feel very much like having you to-night on account of the bad news I had just heard — and another thing — but we have had so many good times together, that it seemed not quite fair to you and an unnecessary hardship for me to de-

prive myself of the pleasure of seeing you once more.

"Not see us any more," cried Irma. "Well, why not?"

"Don't think that I take too serious a view of things," continued Goeffrey, "it isn't that; but I have thought about it a good deal to-day and it seems to me that I must lead one kind of life or another. This kind is very pleasant, I admit, but I shan't be able to do my share now, and to take part in it on any other terms wouldn't be possible."

"Vell, goot night," interrupted Davenport, imitating the accent of the old chauffeur. It seemed to him that Goeffrey was very dull and he settled himself in his chair as if to take a nap.

"Do be quiet," said Irma, speaking to him again.

"So I'm going to buckle down and see what it's like — earning one's living — and luckily I have a way of earning it because I have a profession. I'm an architect. My father asked me one day to promise him that after he died I would come home and go into business. I made the promise and I came here to keep it, but I'm afraid I haven't kept it very well, but the reason I didn't in part, was because it didn't seem fair exactly. I ran across a number of chaps here, chaps I had known in Paris, and most of them were having a hard time to get along. Why should I, who had so much, try to get work which they needed. They were like poor artists, struggling to get money and fame — it was like taking the bread out of their mouths."

"Take bread out of an artist's mouth," suddenly interrupted Davenport, again laughing immoderately. "Why, you must be a presti-ti-ti-digi-tateur, not an architect. Take some gold coins out of Eckstein's nose."

The Jew, who was a total stranger to Davenport, shot an angry glance at him and renewed protestations were heard.

"Oh, he's too impossible."

"We'll put you out, Davenport."

"He's so fresh."

Goeffrey prepared to sit down, but in response to numerous invitations to go on, began again.

"Well — there isn't much more to say except to repeat that I want your good wishes. People say that it is hard to make money, but if one is in earnest, if one does one's best, I don't think it can be so very difficult. You all make money. If there is any secret about it other than hard work, tell me what it is?"

He stopped as if waiting for an answer, but no one spoke. Thinking perhaps of those bitter blows which life had dealt each of them, they looked at Goeffrey's eager expression, at his bearing of confidence in facing for the first time the realities of life — life which had left them with no illusions — with a feeling of pity for him and with the knowledge that their dearly bought experience was useless to anyone except themselves. That he must learn the answer to his question unaided. An uneasy silence followed — accompanied by a movement of restlessness. Goeffrey was beginning to bore

them — an unpardonable crime — but at that instant a sharp report was heard, followed by a cry of pain from Davenport, who was seen holding his cheek. Taking some ivory counters from the poker table, he had slipped them down Irma's back and had received in return a stinging slap in the face. This diversion was taken instant advantage of, shouts of laughter were heard from the men, accompanied by cries of pretended indignation from the women. All jumped up, including Goeffrey, who felt that he had been putting a damper on the festivities, and rushed at the unfortunate Davenport, who tried to evade them by running around the furniture, showing surprising agility for a drunken man. "Put him in the study," Goeffrey directed, as they cornered him, and in spite of his struggles, he was seized, thrust in and the door was locked, but almost at once, like one of those harlequins on the stage, who no sooner go out at one door, than they appear at another, he came in again at the entrance to the apartment. He had discovered that the rear door was unlocked, and running for one flight down the narrow stairs, by which Doris had left on a previous afternoon, he had come up at the front. He was seized again, but this time resorting to passive resistance, he refused to move, so that they were compelled to carry him. All helped, and a dense mass surrounded him from which only his head protruded, his rather long blond hair hanging down as they bore him toward his prison. Laughter, shouts and facetious comments mingled as they moved slowly toward the

study, when for some unaccountable reason, feeling that they were no longer alone, they looked behind them — and Davenport dropped to the floor. Mrs. Aladine, Nina, Mr. Bancroft and Pandolfi, who had gone out a few minutes before, stood in the doorway.

“Miss Davidge,” said Pandolfi, with a sinister smile, “your fiancée.”

In a flash on Goeffrey's brain, befuddled though it was, an indelible impression was printed, of the entire scene. He saw his guests, men and women, taken off their guard, awkward and ill at ease; he saw Mrs. Aladine tall, beautiful and elegant, looking about with a gracious, kindly and half amused smile, he saw Nina's expression of scorn and hauteur, Pandolfi's triumphant manner, Doris's glance of reproach and he was even conscious that Davenport, possessed with a maudlin idea of escaping notice, was crawling stealthily on his hands and knees through the half open door of the study.

Nina took the letter from her muff and laid it on the table.

“For you,” she said, without looking at him, “from my father,” and turned toward the door.

A tempest of rage and despair filled Goeffrey's heart, his world was tumbling about him in utter ruin, and in this final havoc, as in the rest, Pandolfi had a hand. He went up to him, inflamed with fury. “I have to thank you for this,” he cried thickly and struck him in the face. Pandolfi reeled, caught at the tablecloth and precipitated an avalanche of dishes to the

floor, but recovering himself, he rushed at Goeffrey only to be thrust aside as lightly as a feather by Glevin who pushed him out of the door.

"Did he know?" asked Mrs. Aladine of Richard, a light of understanding dawning in her eyes, "for shame."

Nina had already gone out with Mr. Bancroft and Richard accompanied Mrs. Aladine into the hall. "Let me go back with you?" he said. "If you will walk slowly with Nina and Mr. Bancroft, I will overtake you, but I must get rid of the others?"

And Goeffrey was alone at last — in the disordered room, amid the *débris* of the broken dishes swept to the floor by Pandolfi, and with his thoughts of his ruined fortunes and of Nina's scorn. Every tie that bound him to the past was gone it seemed to him, and he would wake in the morning like someone waking in a strange land, without friends and with a future before him with which the past had no connection. He thought of his life since he had been in New York and how in spite of his idleness, he too had been inoculated with its fever, its unrest, so that even his pleasures were sought with a sort of ferocity, an appetite for excitement which became more and more insatiable.

He went to a window and raised the shade — the moon had set and under the light of the stars, sprinkling the blue black of the night sky, the buildings rose, vast, silent and somber, like sleepless sentinels watching for the hordes which would return at dawn. And at

the thought of them, as he had watched them so often, their countless numbers, their wan, pallid and tired faces, struggling stupidly as if under the hypnosis of some grotesque idea, he realized fully for the first time what he had to do and a feeling of terror seized him at the thought that to-morrow he too must be one of them, must gird himself to take part in that heart-breaking and relentless struggle.

He was aroused by someone moving in the study. No one had thought of Davenport. Going in he found him stretched on a sofa, sleeping uneasily, and seizing him by the shoulder he shook him roughly.

"Here, get up, will you?"

Davenport rose immediately without speaking, not half awake. Goeffrey seized his overcoat, got it on somehow, and placing his hat on his head led him toward the door in silence. As they passed the poker table, Davenport with an automatic movement gathered up a handful of ivory counters and tossed them in the air. As they fell they struck the top of his hat with a drumming noise. Without a word Goeffrey led him into the hall and left him there, but almost at once a knock was heard, Davenport was standing outside again. He still seemed almost asleep and swayed slightly from side to side.

"Where are they?" he asked, looking stupidly at Goeffrey.

"Go to the devil!" the latter shouted furiously and slammed the door in his face.

Suddenly he remembered the letter Nina had

brought. She had laid it on the table just before he had struck Pandolfi, and it must be buried in the mass of dishes which had fallen to the floor. He called Waters, who always remained discreetly in his little kitchen until summoned, and told him to look for it, but Waters was unsuccessful. A thorough search was made, the room was ransacked, but without success. It had disappeared.

## CHAPTER X

RICHARD found Mrs. Aladine, Nina and Mr. Bancroft, waiting for him before the Kenworthy with a motor cab which had been passing as they came out. No one knew why it should have been necessary for him to go back with them, but he got in, sitting with Mr. Bancroft on the small front seats and they returned to Mrs. Aladine's house almost without speaking, each under the influence of the unfortunate contretemps which they had had a part in and each of the others respecting Nina's evident agitation. Richard spoke to her once, but she barely replied to him, and on reaching the house, went upstairs immediately. The two men prepared to go, but Mrs. Aladine would not hear of it. Her eyes were bright and there was a flush of color in her beautiful and delicate face, usually rather pale.

"Must you go? I know it is very late, but I am not in the least sleepy, and I am dying for a cup of tea. Won't you wait and have one with me, Julien?" she said to Mr. Bancroft, and seeing him about to raise his hand with the usual gesture of protestation, she continued quickly, "to please me, that is, unless you are very tired."

"I never have breakfast until noon," he replied.

"It was because I thought that you were only prompted by your usual kindly hospitality, but if you want a cup yourself —"

"Then that is settled," she answered. "Tea will hardly appeal to you, Mr. Whitely, but Jacob will bring you whatever you want. I must see Nina for a few moments, but I shall be back by the time it is made."

Jacob led the two men to a small parlor at one side of the great hall, where he left them after replenishing the fire which was burning dimly in the grate. Mr. Bancroft sat down before it, but Richard, struck by the beauty of the room, moved about it with interest. The walls to the cornice were paneled with an oak wainscoting, evidently very old, English he thought, slightly worm eaten, with the mellow tones of antique woodwork. The curtains at the single door and at the windows had the unmistakable elegance, faded but luxurious, of Genoese velvet of the sixteenth century. The furniture too was old, beautiful examples of English mahogany. Two vases of antique Chinese porcelain and an old French clock stood on the mantel shelf, and on each wall hung a portrait, clearly by the hand of some Dutch master. A sense of serenity and charm was given by the taste with which this old furniture, the porcelains, the paneling, the velvet and the paintings had been assembled.

"This is a wonderful house," he said at length, "whose taste brought all this together?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Aladine both loved the antique; the

only thing they had in common — by the way," answered Mr. Bancroft.

"Were they unhappy then? I think I have heard that he was much older."

"Twenty-five years," Mr. Bancroft replied shortly. Then he continued, "*She* was unhappy. Aladine's nature was far from being emotional. He loved his millions and his furniture, that was all."

"And she married him? But why? She doesn't seem to me like a woman who would be in the least likely to marry for money."

"She is not," Mr. Bancroft answered more shortly than before.

Richard had seated himself on the other side of the fireplace, and with his legs stretched out, looked meditatively into the flame.

"Still," he said, "Aladine's millions! a strong temptation."

Mr. Bancroft did not reply, he seemed anxious to drop the subject.

"A temptation few women could resist, I believe," continued Richard, "even the best."

Mr. Bancroft looked keenly at him and then seemed to make a sudden resolution.

"*She* could have resisted him," he said, moving his chair toward Richard, "but she sacrificed herself for her mother — and, well — Aladine did have a way of getting what he wanted. I have known Mrs. Aladine ever since she was a little girl — but Storey told me how it happened. Storey was in the park one day, sitting

on a bench. He has never told me why he goes there but I know; he goes to watch the children sailing their boats in the little lake near Fifth Avenue. He loves children. He was sitting there when Aladine happened along and joined him. They had been talking generally about business matters, until Aladine suddenly said, "The Middle States Road passes into my hands tomorrow, Storey."

"You have come to terms with the Boston shareholders, then?" asked Storey.

"They have come to terms with me, rather," Aladine replied. "If Dayton were living, it would be a bitter pill for him to swallow."

"Dayton knew that he was beaten, that's what killed him — he hardly left a penny. I suppose you know that," Storey said.

"I know that I got his Middle States stock, I don't know what else he had. Look here, Storey," Aladine went on, "Dayton was too old — he had no business to try conclusions with me — he has a railroad; it's his pet — a magnificent property, well managed — I need it to complete my system. If Dayton had built it on purpose to sell it to me, I would have given him twice its cost and felt grateful into the bargain. I made him the most liberal offers, "No, no, wouldn't sell." I asked him to name his own terms, "No, no, wouldn't sell." At last I sent Davidge to him thinking perhaps that he, with his oily tongue, might accomplish something. He pleaded, argued, cajoled, all in vain and at last he said: "Dayton, Aladine feels that with the Middle States

Road in your hands, his own position is not as strong as he would like it to be — let me advise you as a friend to sell it to him — I think he'll get it anyway." Dayton got angry at this. "You tell Aladine," he said, "that he will never own the Middle States Road as long as I live — he hasn't got enough and he could not beg, borrow or steal enough to buy it." But I got it,' Aladine went on. 'He was a good fighter though; he never cried for mercy — but no one sympathized with him, he had done to too many, what I did to him. He was a hard man, a brutal, domineering old man; his wife and daughter had not lived with him for years, I am told, they couldn't stand him.'

"Now comes the curious part," continued Mr. Bancroft, "I can repeat Storey's exact words almost. As Aladine was speaking, a young lady came toward them and sat down on a bench nearly opposite. Storey and Aladine gave her a preoccupied glance, stopped talking and began to watch her with deep interest. Unconscious of their scrutiny, she sat almost facing them. At times her hat, which slanted down, hid, when her head was bent, all but a mouth and chin which gave them an impression of gravity, but when she looked up, they could see that her eyes were very soft and at the same time brilliant. She did not stay there long, looking about her as if expecting someone, and at the approach of an older woman, who walked as if enfeebled by illness, she got up at once and they turned a corner of the path together. Her movements, her walk, the folds of her black dress, the slant of her hat, her manner of

looking down; all of these things, which seemed to have something markedly attractive and individual about them, together with her indisputable beauty, made an extraordinary impression on them. Each, like all men of great business sagacity, possessed an intuitive faculty of appraisal and perhaps they recognized that there was something rare and therefore valuable about her.

“‘Storey,’ said Aladine all of a sudden, ‘I’ve made up my mind to marry, and there goes my future wife.’

“‘Very appropriate,’ Storey answered, ‘you can give her your Middle States stock as a wedding present.’

“‘Why that more than anything else?’ Aladine asked him.

“‘So that she may come into her own again,’ said Storey.

“Aladine was puzzled. ‘Look here,’ he said, ‘what are you driving at?’

“‘Do you mean to say that you don’t know who she is?’ Storey asked him.

“‘I never saw her before — do you?’

“‘Yes; I don’t know her, but I know who she is.’

“‘Well, who is she?’

“‘Dayton’s daughter.’

“Aladine did not answer for a moment, then he whistled.

“‘Dayton’s daughter!’ he repeated, ‘but I shall marry her all the same.’ That’s how Aladine first saw his wife. Dayton had always given her mother a liberal allowance, but at his ruin she found herself dependent upon the income from a small property of her own

amounting to less than two thousand a year. It didn't improve her temper. It seems incredible that Mrs. Aladine could have been the product of two such people as Dayton and his wife. Well, Aladine appeared — I doubt if to this day Mrs. Aladine knows that he ruined her father — and Mrs. Dayton finally persuaded her to marry him. She didn't enjoy her new found luxury long; less than a year I think — and so it was settled; but they never understood each other. Aladine bought her because he wanted her, not because he loved her. That was the only way he knew how to get anything — by buying it — and she could never, although I could see that she tried, overcome her sense of reserve, of shyness caused by the coldness and real brutality of his nature. I have often wondered what the outcome would have been had Aladine lived. You see Storey began to come here. He and Aladine had never been friends, Aladine always hated a bigger man than himself, but Mrs. Aladine appealed to Storey from the first, and she liked him — better than her husband without doubt, and Aladine knew it and would sometimes humiliate her before Storey on purpose. Do you know what I think would have happened if he had lived and kept that up — that sort of thing? I think that Storey would have crushed him, squeezed him dry and flung him away like a used up orange — would have ruined him as he had ruined Dayton and he could have done it, powerful as Aladine was. I don't mean in the least to intimate that she loved Storey, because she didn't, and Aladine knew that too, but he was kind to her. Aladine showered on her that

which was dross to him — money — but what would have been gold to her, he couldn't give her. Yes, he used to hurt her before Storey. Storey would have stood it for awhile and then he would have warned Aladine to stop. This would only have made Aladine persist in doing it even more than he had before and then something would have happened. Things were getting very close to this point when Aladine died.

“The doctors, I believe, had given him warning, to which he paid no more attention than he would have to Storey's, and so one day death came and stood before him and beckoned, once, and as a child at bedtime lays aside its toys, Aladine, that relentless man, humbly put away his schemes, his negotiations, his implacable hatreds, his ceaseless task of piling millions on millions and composed himself for sleep. Do you know, Mr. Whitely, there is something incomprehensible to me about death? We see our friends about us, they come and go as we do, eat, sleep, and laugh, enjoy the act of living, and all at once, he beckons and something takes place: they are gone, they are not here. What is it that happens which makes us his victims. I have never been ill. I have led a life of moderation in everything. Through temperament and circumstance, no worries have fretted me and yet each year I am getting a little further down on the debit side until one day I, too, will be gone. Why I do not know.”

Mr. Bancroft paused for a moment and then went on. “Yes, there is something mysterious about it. Aladine was ill a week. One day he said to his wife, ‘I am

afraid I never understood you, Constance. You are a good woman, but it seems to me you always wanted something which I couldn't give.' When he died, he left the burden of all those millions on her delicate shoulders — Storey helps her, she could do nothing without him and he worships the ground she walks on. Don't think that I am betraying confidences in telling you this. Everyone knows it — your cousin could have told you."

The sound of a door being closed in some distant part of the house, came to them. Mr. Bancroft drew his chair still closer.

"The question many people ask is, will she marry again? I say yes — she is young, beautiful, immensely rich and she has never known love. But God help the man who harms one hair of her head while Storey is alive." A note of solemnity, perhaps of warning, sounded in the old man's voice, but before he could go on, a rustling of skirts sounded in the passage and Mrs. Aladine came in.

"No tea?" she exclaimed, "and nothing for you to drink? How mournful you look," and she laughed. Richard pushed a chair up for her and she sat down between them.

"What a day!" she went on, "a day of excitement and adventure. If it hadn't been for Nina's calamities and Goeffrey's, I would have enjoyed it, I think."

"How is Miss Davidge?" Mr. Bancroft asked.

"Poor child, she is dazed. But she is angry too, which is encouraging. What could have made Goeffrey do such a thing on the very night of his engagement?"

"He had arranged it long ago and had quite forgotten about it," Richard answered. "When he got home to-night and found the table laid, he was amazed. He thought of stopping it then, but it was too late. There is no harm in Goeffrey. Is Nina such a little Puritan as that?"

"I told her that it could probably be explained in some way. But I am afraid she won't give him a chance. Poor Goeffrey. And how contemptible of Mr. Pandolfi to take us up there. I hope that I shall never see him again."

Jacob appeared, bearing a tray containing cigars and cigarettes, the tea, several decanters and a cold chicken. Mr. Bancroft confessed to being hungry and attacked the chicken with evident pleasure. Mrs. Aladine allowed a small slice to be put on her plate, but Richard, helping himself to the Scotch, pleaded a complete lack of appetite, having just finished supper. A small upright stood in the room and going to it he said, looking back at Mrs. Aladine: "May I, if it is very *pianissimo*?"

"Oh, yes, you know I want to hear you," she answered. 'And Richard played — but only those ephemeral airs which Goeffrey's companions had heard not long before. Richard repeated them, running from one to the other, little lyrical things; gay, with their undercurrents of unconscious ennui, playing them very softly with an elegance which gave them a note of distinction less clever hands would have been unable to produce. Mrs. Aladine leaned back in her chair and lighted a cigarette. The firelight played on her pure profile, the peculiar ele-

gance of her shoulders, her grace of movement. Some subtle exhilaration seemed to animate her and while she talked with Mr. Bancroft, Richard knew that she was listening to him, felt intuitively that she was thinking of him, that he had impressed her.

"Let us hope," Mr. Bancroft was saying, "that that letter, which really caused all the trouble, will at least be of some help to Goeffrey."

"How much has Goeffrey lost, Julien?"

"Thirty thousand a year about."

"But how much money does that mean?"

"Three quarters of a million, perhaps. It would depend on how much it earned."

"I was thinking, Julien, could I give it to him? I have so much."

Mr. Bancroft was staggered.

"Do you realize that it is an enormous sum of money?"

"Not to me. Sometimes when I go over my affairs with Vincent, I am frightened at what I have; at the shares, the bonds, the mines, the railroads, the houses, all the things that are mine." She drew a deep breath.

"It seems to crush me—and it is always growing, greater and greater, I cannot spend it. When I try to give, Vincent is very strict with me—he talks about the evils of indiscriminate charity. What does it matter if it makes people happy—why can't I do as I like with my own? You see what has happened to Goeffrey—if I could give him what he has lost, everything would be as it was before—and they could marry."

Mr. Bancroft had finished his chicken and had lighted a cigar.

"And how has anything changed so far as they intrinsically are concerned? If they love each other, let them marry — she has a little."

"Five thousand a year; it would be hard to live on that."

"Many people do, and not badly. But the point is do they love each other?"

Mrs. Aladine was looking meditatively into the fire.

"How can they tell, how can anyone tell what love is — lasting love. It seems to me that there are so many emotions that take its disguise or else so many kinds of love itself, that until we try, we cannot know the permanent from the fleeting." She turned and leaning toward him repeated, "How can one tell, Julien?"

"The main thing is, one must not search for it, I think; it must come of itself," he answered.

"Yes, that is best," she acquiesced, and she got up and went to the piano. Richard knew that he had drawn her to him.

"How frivolous you are," she said, "do you like such music?"

"Yes, I like it."

"Why?"

"Because it is frivolous. I will confess to you that I like all that is frivolous, gay, inconsequential in life — I told you that rooms affect me and a moment ago I thought of something — I thought I saw a little dancer in chiffon and gauze, dancing in the cloister of one of

those old monastic houses one sees abroad. This room is the cloister, my music the little dancer dancing in it."

"You don't like my room, then?"

"Yes, it has charm. But in its bare simplicity, in the rigid purity of its furniture, there is something austere. That is why I play music which is frivolous, if you like, because it brings in a note of gayety. Another thing, these airs were running in my head because I had been playing them at Goeffrey's."

"We have been talking about Goeffrey," she replied. "Is he very much cast down?"

"Not he! He intends beginning to-morrow to make another fortune and when he has made it, it is quite simple you know, he will lay it at Nina's feet."

"You are making fun of him."

"Not at all, but Goeffrey is an enthusiast,—not from conviction, but by temperament. And he has no knowledge of the things one must know in order to make money —"

"He has his profession."

"Learned in the schools, and which may be of use to him after he has unlearned most of it."

Mrs. Aladine laughed.

"It is lucky for Goeffrey that he has something left, even if it is only enthusiasm. What would become of him were he as pessimistic as you are?"

"I am far from being a pessimist," Richard answered, "but I have learned to recognize the futilities of life. And how much trouble that saves one."

Richard still played on and Mrs. Aladine watched him.

His profile reminded her of that of the incomparable Hermes.

"Those women," she said at last, "who were they?"

"They were actresses," he answered, "friends of Goeffrey's."

"Did you like them?"

"They seemed good sorts, but you must remember that I had not met them before. Still, I would like them, I think, because, you see, they live."

"Live! Live!" answered Mrs. Aladine with a touch of impatience in her voice, "what do you mean?"

"By living? I mean enjoying — enjoying that which is to be enjoyed in life, if only we know how."

"I think we all do that."

"Perhaps."

"That is as much as we have capacity for."

"Precisely, and how few but might have a greater capacity if they chose — a capacity for being sensible to all that is beautiful and joyous in life. A capacity for being able to respond to the innumerable things, that if we know them, may subtly lift us above our fellows. To have the sensibilities to feel and the emotions to make poignant. That is life. How many live it? Do you?"

"I wonder," she said and then she added, "You think that I do not."

"I don't know."

"No! you think that I do not. But perhaps I do — more than you imagine. You think that I am austere like this room of mine."

"Yes!" he answered, looking straight into her eyes. "Beautiful,—but austere."

Mrs. Aladine, with an air of coldness, made a movement as if to turn away, but Richard, indicating Mr. Bancroft, whispered, "He is asleep, let me ask you something."

Mr. Bancroft was leaning back peacefully in his chair, his cigar lying on the table. His hands were folded one over the other and his eyes were closed. He did not move when Mrs. Aladine softly called his name.

"What is it?" she answered.

"I should like so much to see more of your house. It is celebrated, as of course you know—I have heard so much of the tapestries and of the porcelains you have here. Will you show me some of them?"

"Yes, if you like," she replied still coldly and they went out leaving Mr. Bancroft still resting in his chair.

She led him slowly through a number of small rooms whose single lights dimly illuminating them, she augmented by pressing the buttons of the electric switches which were placed at the sides of each doorway. Her coldness, her slight air of hauteur, gradually left her as she called his attention to various objects and noticed the intelligent appreciation of his answers. In turn she revealed to him a varied knowledge, a refined and fastidious taste and a genuine love for her collections, based on a sympathy which is not always found among collectors whose comprehension of what they possess is sometimes more archæological than artistic. Richard was amazed at the number and beauty of the objects he saw.

"What labor the collection of all this must have required," he said, "and what discrimination."

"It is my greatest happiness," she replied. "But the trouble is, that finally one only wants superlative things."

"And where have you found them all?" he asked.

"Oh! everywhere. In England, France, Italy, even China. I am abroad so much — When I find something that I like, my agent in Paris, a very honorable man, buys it for me. Mr. Storey suggested this because it seems that one must not allow oneself to pay too much for anything — even if one wants it very much."

They had come now to the large drawing-room which Mrs. Aladine illuminated as she had done the others.

"This is the Rembrandt Mr. Storey loves so much," she said. "What is it," she continued after a moment, "that makes us love these old things as we do? We know that they are beautiful, often wonderfully so, but is that the only reason? Sometimes it seems to me that in addition to their beauty there is something pathetic too and appealing about them."

"Yes, there is," Richard answered, "and with reason, because the hand of man will never make the like of them again. He has forgotten how. They are the products of conditions which will never return. They are what is left of the golden age of art, and when they are gone, there will be nothing left to teach us its lesson. It is as if they were saying to us, 'Learn well what we have to tell you because soon our voices will be still.'"

"I think," she said, "that often Americans feel this more keenly than other people, because we really have no art, no literature and no traditions."

"Nor ever will have," he answered.

Suddenly a slight cry escaped her: "Look!" she exclaimed, "it is morning."

They were standing in the doorway opening into the great library where Pandolfi had announced Davidge's flight. No lamps were burning in the room, and a pale light came in at the windows, illuminating dimly the pilasters, the books and the painted ceiling. At the opposite end of the room in the great fireplace of black and yellow marble, a faint line of smoke ascended slowly from the embers smoldering on the hearth. Without they could see the trees of the park, standing motionless in the hush of dawn, and far on the other side the buildings raised aloft their vast cubes of masonry in which occasional lights still gleamed faintly. Mrs. Aladine did not illuminate this room as she had done the others, and as they came into its pale light they seemed to step into another world, a world of shadows, intangible almost, cool and serene. They talked in whispers. "Let me play you one thing more," he said to her, "and then I shall go. It should never be played except at dawn. It must be the sort of thing that the elves dance to and if you go to the window, perhaps I shall be able to summon them for you," and he began playing very softly, Berlioz's "Dance of the Will o' the Wisps," from the "Damnation of Faust," and Mrs. Aladine watched him again, noticed again his profile like that of the incom-

parable Hermes and noticed too the extraordinary impression of elegance and modernity he conveyed.

"Do you see them?" he asked.

Mrs. Aladine turned to the window and looked out. Suddenly she clasped her hands together with an exclamation of delight.

"Of course I see them, how charming. There is a little circle of them dancing hand in hand on the grass, they go faster and faster. But there is something strange about them too. What is it? Oh!" she said, turning to him, with an air of deep disappointment, "they cannot be elves at all, they are quite modern and smart. They wear white waistcoats and the light twinkles on their glossy hats and their shiny boots; the ladies are in ball gowns and close by, there are some motors, no bigger than my hand, and a little brougham."

Richard laughed. "Now you are making fun of me," he said. "Let me try again," and he began something which sounded very sylvan, simple and archaic.

"No! they don't like that, they have vanished. If I could play as you do, I am sure that I could bring them, but you are too modern and you can only summon some new kind of fairies, little modern people, very smart, very well dressed," and suddenly abandoning her bantering tone, she came close up to him and said, "Why do you think that I am austere?"

"I said something personal to you a little while ago," he replied, "and it displeased you. If I am to answer you, I must be personal again."

"Very well, but tell me."

"I did not mean austere exactly, but you are by way of becoming a *préciense*; I shall speak frankly to you because you have given me permission. You have a hobby; don't have one, you are too young. It is all very well, for instance, that you should possess all of these wonderful things that you have shown me; but they should be yours as a matter of course, by right of your wealth and position, it should not be *wonderful* that you should have them, you should not be absorbed by them as some old savant is absorbed in his investigations. Besides, you have something more beautiful than all of your paintings, your figurines, your porcelains, your exquisite furniture, and that is yourself — and you have youth — make the most of it."

As Richard spoke again of her beauty, a slight expression of disdain, of hauteur returned to her face and noticing it, he stopped abruptly and got up.

"I have been very thoughtless to have kept you up like this. I have tired you horribly. Forgive me. Good-night," he said gravely and held out his hand.

"Don't go," she answered. "Or, perhaps you had better, it is so late — but let me tell you, you are right — I understand quite well what you mean and you are right, only I have been trying to fill a life that is very empty."

"I am sorry," he answered. "You have so much it seems to me that with a little more you would have everything."

"Ah, yes," she said, "and for that little more one

sometimes feels that one would give up all the rest. It seems very strange that I should talk to you as I have done — until this afternoon I didn't know you."

"I don't know why, but it would have seemed strange somehow if you had not — you see our friendship begins at the beginning of a new day. Perhaps that is a good omen. May I come again soon?"

They shook hands and she turned away — but in a moment she came back to him. She half put up her hands as if to offer them to him but dropped them again at her sides. She looked very beautiful, but pale and slightly fatigued, and going close up to him with an air almost of entreaty, she said so softly that he could hardly hear her, "Yes, come soon. And — and help me. You have helped me so much."

Mr. Bancroft, in no very good humor, was standing with his back to the fire — rubbing his eyes — when she returned to the little parlor.

"Do you know what I have been thinking," he said, "that I have never liked men who play the piano."

## CHAPTER XI

HORTENSE, Mrs. Martel's maid, who had gone in quietly half an hour before, to close the bedroom windows, was waiting patiently in a small outer passage. Suddenly a bell, fixed in the wall above her, sounded twice. Getting up quickly and repeating this signal somewhere by pressing twice on an electric button in the wall, she opened the door softly and went in.

The room was paneled in dark gray and white with a quantity of small mirrors let into the doors between moldings of painted wood. These mirrors repeated with pleasing effect, the fire burning in the French fireplace of white marble, the sconces with their white candles surmounted by tiny electric bulbs, covered with rose colored shades, the curtains of rose colored silk at the windows and at the bed, the French furniture of gilded cane and the rugs of white Thibetan wool. A small table stood beside the bed on which rested a silver tray containing a glass pitcher enclosed in a network of silver wire, a decanter of Scotch whiskey, a plate of biscuits and a cigarette case of gold. On a shelf immediately below, were a number of novels, one of which was open face down.

Mrs. Martel was still in bed, her beautiful hair piled

up on her head and tied with a broad rose colored ribbon.

"What is the thermostat set for?" she asked as Hortense appeared.

"Seventy degrees, madame," answered Hortense looking at the thermometer.

Mrs. Martel reached across the table, displaying a perfect arm and an elbow as smooth and round as an egg, and lighted a cigarette.

"My pegnoir and slippers, please. Is the masseuse here?"

"Yes, madame, she is waiting in the dressing-room."

Slipping on the pegnoir and letting Hortense adjust the slippers, she disappeared into the dressing-room, sacred to those mysterious rites of the toilet which all women perform before the altar of their charms.

Hortense rang another bell and a maid appeared to put the room in order. She brought with her a number of letters which Hortense carried into the boudoir, an adjoining room, and laid on the table where Mrs. Martel breakfasted. Drawing it up to the fire and placing a French fauteuil before it she in turn disappeared into the dressing-room. In half an hour Mrs. Martel reappeared, dressed, but still wearing her pegnoir, and at the same moment a knock sounded at the door of the boudoir and Hortense admitted a man servant bearing a tray on which stood a pot of chocolate, rolls and butter. Mrs. Martel ate one roll, drank one cup of chocolate and upon the removal of the tray,

lighted a cigarette and was about to open her letters, when a knock was heard again and the maid appeared carrying two large hat boxes which Hortense opened at once, taking a hat from each.

Mrs. Martel got up, put one of them on and surveyed herself in the glass.

"It is hideous!" she exclaimed, secretly pleased.

"Oh! no, madame — on the contrary, it is charming," Hortense exclaimed.

She took it off and was putting on the other, when the door opened for the third time and the two children, Helen and Lucas, ran in, followed by their governess, another French woman.

"Mamma, Lucas had a dream last night," Helen announced at once, coming close to her mother and looking back smiling. "Tell it, Lucas."

"Yeth," Lucas answered with a slight lisp — "I did. I dwemt that Nellie and I were going to heaven and Nellie said, 'mind your manners.' And — and — I had a box of candy — and so when I got there, I said to the angel, 'Will you have a piece, Miss Mary?' And she said, 'No, thank you.'"

Lucas stood rather abashed at the amusement this story aroused, and then suddenly throwing himself on the floor, he laughed louder than any, partly from embarrassment and partly from sheer joy.

"You little cherub," said his mother. "And why did you call the angel Miss Mary?"

"Why, that was her name."

Helen had been examining the hat boxes.

"I am so glad your hats come from Carducci, mamma."

"Don't you think the plume is much too long?" Mrs. Martel was asking Hortense, and Helen went on: "Because Edith's mamma says that he is *extremely* smart." She rested her elbow on the top of the bureau and putting her chin in her hand, she said in a dreamy tone:

"Mamma, *was* Maline the most beautiful princess in the world?"

"What *is* the child talking about!" exclaimed Mrs. Martel.

"I have been reading them a fairy story, madame," the governess answered.

And Helen added, "The princess Maline lived in a tower in the middle of a plain and the prince came and rescued her and they lived happily ever afterwards. And she was the most beautiful, beautiful princess in the world."

"Mamma, may I play with this?" asked Lucas, holding up a large toilet bottle of cut glass.

"Yes, my child, if you will be very careful."

"Yes, I will be very careful," he answered with an ecstatic expression on his face, at being allowed to hold such an enchanting object.

A knock sounded again and Hortense brought Mrs. Martel a note. On seeing printed in the corner of the envelope, Madame Shea, Modiste, she hesitated to open it, but finally did so and read:

“DEAR MADAME:—According to our understanding with you, we have never sent bills for more than half your account, to Mr. Martel. These were settled by him in full a month ago, but on the other half which you have always promised to pay yourself, we have had nothing in two years.

“We have written you repeatedly, but you have never answered us. Unless you can give the bearer of this note your cheque for \$1,000.00 on account, we regret to say that we shall be obliged to bring suit against you immediately.

“Very respectfully,

“MADAME SHEA.”

Mrs. Martel made a gesture of impatience, and going to her writing desk, drew out a cheque book and was about to write a cheque, when a crash was heard followed by a complete silence. Lucas had let the bottle fall on the hearth.

His mother jumped up, increasing her irritation by knocking her cheque book off the desk. “You naughty, naughty boy, what have you done? Can I never have one moment’s peace! Take it off at once,” she continued to Helen who, standing before the glass, had been trying on one of the new hats. “Please take them away, why will you be so naughty?”

Lucas with the pitiful expression one sometimes sees in children’s faces when they weep, an expression which asks for love and consolation instead of anger, began

to sob heartbrokenly as the governess led them out and closed the door.

"Now," said Mrs. Martel, "give me the cheque-book, please. Do you know what that impertinent woman writes? You may tell the person who is waiting, that I shall have nothing more to do with Madame Shea."

She handed the note to Hortense, who glanced through it.

"But, Madame, you cannot give her a cheque. Your book was returned by the bank this morning and they say that your account is too much overdrawn."

"But it isn't overdrawn," cried Mrs. Martel with increasing exasperation. She turned over the pages and showed the maid some figures on the margin. "I have twelve hundred dollars there — they are your own figures."

"But they are very accurate at the bank. Perhaps I have made a mistake."

"Very well, go over it again."

Hortense sat down and they went laboriously through the cheque book, from the date of the previous balance, Mrs. Martel reading off the various deposits, and Hortense deducting from them the cheques which had been paid out. The result was, with the difference of a few dollars, the same as that which Mrs. Martel had referred to.

"You see," said the latter, "I can perfectly well give Madame Shea a cheque."

"Still, I think that the bank may be right, madame," the maid answered.

"How can it be right? You talk like a fool. Besides, if they are right, it's your fault. You are supposed to keep my accounts."

Hortense got up without speaking and went into the bedroom. Mrs. Martel followed her to the door.

"Why don't you answer me?" she asked angrily.

"If I am a fool, you had better get someone else," Hortense answered, darting a look of resentment at her mistress from under her lashes.

"Very well, you may go whenever you like." Mrs. Martel returned to the boudoir, sat down before the desk, an expression of sullen resentment on her face, and began to again go over the figures in her cheque book. Presently Hortense returned, picked up the hats and prepared to put them away.

"But I insist on knowing definitely whether the bank is right or not," Mrs. Martel went on. "That woman is waiting, you keep my accounts, how can there be such a difference?"

"I cannot keep madame's accounts, if she makes out cheques without telling me and does not put them down."

"Oh! then I am to blame?"

"We shall see," answered Hortense. She took from the desk a bundle of vouchers which the bank had returned with the bank-book and began comparing them with the entries made in the counterfoils of the cheque book. Four cheques remained which had not been entered, aggregating nearly fifteen hundred dollars.

"You see, madame, I never saw these cheques before."

"Good heavens," cried Mrs. Martel pettishly, "I should think that I might write cheques in my own book."

"But I cannot keep it accurately, if you don't tell me about them."

Mrs. Martel put her hands to her ears.

"Good God! please stop — you will drive me distracted with your arguing. Well, I must get rid of that woman. Is Mr. Martel at home?"

"I don't know," Hortense answered shortly, and added under her breath, "*voyez vous-même.*"

If Mrs. Martel heard this rejoinder, she ignored it, and going to the desk again, she wrote:

"Mrs. Martel will send Madame Shea the cheque she asks for to-morrow and will be careful not to employ her again."

She handed it to Hortense and as the latter left the room, got up and went to the mirror. Her peignoir was made of some material that fell in very many fine straight clinging folds, such as one sees sometimes in the draperies of Greek statues; the sleeves were short and it was cut so as to display her perfect neck. She looked very beautiful, very alluring. Should she wear it? Should she make that appeal to him by which she had conquered him so often? Should she? No, it would be base now — before, there had been at least a residue of sincerity in those appeals, now there was none. And as she thought of those coqueties in which his simpler

nature had never seen one trace of calculation, she felt ashamed. And as she thought of that love which had come into her life again, which obsessed her, a feeling of momentary sadness seized her — a sadness, without regret. A feeling that she must go on — was being carried forward by a force dangerous but dear to her, which she gloried in, knowing at the same time, its peril.

Hortense coming back, she put on a street gown and went downstairs. Martel was in his study standing before a window. His back was toward her and his hands were thrust into his pockets. Against the light she could see well the outline of his compact and vigorous frame. As she came in, closing the door after her, he turned without speaking and looked at her again with that indescribable look, out of his intensely blue eyes, a look which had once before vaguely disquieted her. "May I speak to you for a moment, Charles?" She sat down in a small chair and rested an elbow on a table beside it. He too, seated himself. "It is not pleasant, but I must tell you."

"Very well; what is it?" Martel answered quietly, coldly almost, but he seemed to listen tensely for her answer.

"It is about money." Martel seemed to hear this with relief almost, he relaxed slightly. "When you asked me a month ago for a list of the people I owed money to, I did not give you everything. To Madame Shea for instance, I owed nearly two thousand more than I told you."

"Are there others?" he asked her.

She hesitated for a moment in order to overcome that

impulse for misrepresentation which had become habitual to her in her dealings with him, but it seemed to her that her crowning dishonesty made it necessary for her to be truthful in smaller things at least, and she answered:

"Yes, some others, but Madame Shea will be quite willing to take a thousand dollars at present."

"Let me have all the rest of your bills, and I will pay them. Will you let me have them all?" he continued.

"Yes, Charles." And after a moment she added, "I am sorry."

"Sorry?"

"Sorry, because I didn't tell you the whole truth before."

"And I am glad," he answered. "Do you know why?"

"No; why are you glad?"

"Because you have told me the truth now, even if it is a little late." And almost gently he added, drawing some papers towards him, "Tell me, what they are."

As well as she could remember, she gave him the list, concealing nothing. When she had finished he said:

"Is that everything?"

"Yes, everything."

"It is not so much."

"It is a good deal, Charles, are you sure that you can afford to pay them?"

"Oh, yes; you see I borrowed some money from Storey a month ago, and I have some of it yet."

"Were you compelled to borrow, Charles?"

"Yes; I had run behind."

"I am sorry," she said again, "because — I know — that I have been the cause of it."

Neither spoke for a while, and then Mrs. Martel laughed softly.

"I must tell you something Lucas told me this morning," she said, "it is so amusing." And she repeated the story of the dream.

Her husband smiled, that smile which showed the real Martel.

"He is a good little chap," he said.

"And I was vexed with him and scolded him. He broke one of my toilet bottles. I was so sorry afterwards. It seems that I am always being sorry for something."

Again they were silent. Their house, rather far downtown, was in a quarter on which business was encroaching, and through the closed windows sounds of various activities came to them faintly, increasing the sense of quiet where they sat. And this sense of quiet, of security, the harmonious outcome of their interview, gave them a feeling of nearness which was pleasant to them. They looked at each other furtively and there may have come to each a vague longing to be as they were before, to bridge the gulf which had been widening gradually for so many years, to stretch out their arms far, far, until their hands clasped with a strong pressure of amity and forgiveness. Perhaps even at that moment, the love which obsessed her grew faint in Mrs. Martel's heart. Faint to death. Perhaps. One can-

not tell about these things. But Martel's resentment had been melting a little.

"It is good to be sorry," he said at last.

"But not good to be always doing things one must be sorry for," she answered. And after a moment she added, "Are you quite sure, Charles, that it is all right about the bills?"

"Quite all right," he answered and was silent again.

Suddenly she felt that he would speak to her about Richard. Since Martel's coming upon them at Mrs. Aladine's a month before, she had barely seen her husband. No explanation had been attempted. Martel had seen them together. She had broken her promise. But since Richard had come into her life again, that promise had seemed such a preposterous one to make, that she could not imagine how she could have been expected to keep it. Should she make it again, and break it? Perhaps at that moment she was ready to make it again — and keep it. But not if he spoke to her now. She felt almost like being won back to him. If he would be kind to her. But she also felt that if he reproached her then — there would be an end forever.

"Dora," Martel said at last, "we have settled our money matters,— now there are other things to settle."

She looked at him appealingly, tears came to her eyes.

"Oh, Charles," she said piteously, "must we talk of that again now — it tires me so — cannot we let things go? Let me try to prove to you that I am not as bad

as you think. We have spoken so often about it. Cannot we ignore it for a little while?"

"But things are different now, something else has taken place." Something he could not resist, impelled him to go on, to make her discuss it with him — make her explain.

"There is something to be accounted for, something to be said, but by you, not by me."

"What do you want me to say, Charles?" she asked wearily.

"I don't know," he answered.

"What can I say except what I have said so often — that I am sorry?"

"If one could be sorry enough for doing<sup>1</sup> things, perhaps one wouldn't do them. People sometimes look on being sorry as a sort of absolution, a plenary indulgence permitting them to do them again."

"I see — and I am like that." There was a slight bitterness in her tone.

"A little, I am afraid."

"Yes; and that is the trouble. You have never trusted me, never. You have always thought me capable of any dishonesty, any falsehood."

"How could I think anything else?"

"Because you have always put the worst possible construction on everything I did. Because you were always anxious to think ill of me — would have been disappointed if you had found that you were wrong."

"But I found that I was right."

"How do you know that you are right? I tell you

that you are not. I was on my way to Mrs. Aladine's that afternoon and had stopped at a shop. As I was coming out, I met him — I didn't know that he was here. He asked if I were going to Mrs. Aladine's and when I said yes, he asked if he might come with me. What could I do? "

"More lies," said Martel.

"What do you mean? "

"He was in your box at the opera, four or five days before."

"That is not true."

"It is true, Dora, and you know it." Martel got up quickly and exclaimed vehemently. "Why, in God's name, why, why will you always lie to me — why is it that you will never let me trust you? Can't you be honest, don't you know how, don't you care? For God's sake, tell me the reason? "

Mrs. Martel's face became agonized in its expression. like one enduring torture, like a creature at bay. Her hand shook, and trembling with nervous excitement, suffering and pain, she answered:

"Because you would drive any woman to the devil. Because you are always suspicious, because you have always misconstrued even the simplest things I do. Because you have always made it impossible for me to be frank with you. Because, if I told you the truth always, you would never believe me."

"How do you know, have you ever tried? "

"Yes," she answered.

"More lies," Martel repeated.

Suddenly she began to weep, to weep terribly, convulsively, with long mournful sobs which racked her body. And as Martel watched her, heard those sounds of distress, saw her tears, something thrilled him, a feeling of delicious compassion overcame him, an ecstasy of tenderness and love.

It was always so ; while she resisted him, he hated her, but when, her opposition beaten down, she wept, he felt always an irresistible desire to take her in his arms and dry her tears with kisses.

Yes! it was always so — Martel, impelled by some uncontrollable impulse, a sort of ferocious curiosity, invariably returned to the same topic. Every subject — if they were together long enough, seemed to lead irresistibly for him, to that of her dishonesty. It agonized him and yet it attracted him. Explanations followed. Lies, bitter reproaches, tears and then those reconciliations, which meant nothing, led nowhere, which left them always where they were before. And now going to her, he took her hands in his and tried to draw them from her face. Sobs still shook her. “Dora,” he said, gently, “forgive me, please, please forgive me — I know that I am cruel, but somehow I can’t help it. But I love you — forgive me this once — I swear that I will trust you — that I shall never question —”

Mrs. Martel jumped to her feet and threw his hands away from her. “Who is lying now?” she exclaimed through her tears. “You, because you know that it would be impossible to do what you promise. And I

hate you — you have tortured me too much — I want you never to touch me again — never speak to me — I cannot stand it. I will kill myself if you don't leave me in peace."

"And you will make no promise?"

"Never — do what you like. For myself, I don't care what becomes of me — I would rather die than live the life I have been living any longer."

"You have nothing more to say, Dora?"

"Nothing," she answered.

"You are quite sure?" And this time she saw again that disquieting look.

"Quite sure," she answered defiantly. "You cannot make life more unbearable for me than you have done already."

"Then that is all?"

"Yes — all," and she went out.

Martel made a movement as if to follow her and then turning went back to the window. He stood there for a long time, motionless. Yes, it must be ended. He saw at last the specious terms on which their lives had been going on. He realized that it was partly his own fault perhaps, but he could not put away that act which to him was the cause of all their unhappiness. Admitting that his own treatment of her in the past, his conduct toward her, his jealousies, his suspicions may have aroused a defiance in her which partly palliated her actions — there was that *act* which he could never forget, never forgive, which haunted him always. Admitting everything it was still there, could not be put away,

and in the final reckoning with him, she must answer for it. All the laws of marriage, of society seemed to demand, to justify revenge, punishment, disgrace, if a woman erred.

A slight sound caused him to turn. Hortense was just leaving the room — closing the door gently after her. He was about to speak to her when he noticed on his desk an envelope which he knew had not been there before. Perhaps it was a note from his wife. He went over and picked it up.

It was addressed to Richard Whitely, Esq., in his wife's hand. He turned to the door, locked it and sat down, still holding the letter. He looked at it intently, sighed deeply, put it down and buried his face in his hands. Finally he took it up again. He seemed to be contemplating an action which was hateful to him. He looked at it closely and saw that it was hurriedly and carelessly sealed. He reached for a long and slender paper knife which lay beside him, inserted it into the envelope, withdrew it and returned it to the desk.

He sat quite still again, thinking. At last taking up the knife, he carefully opened the flap of the envelope, drew out the letter, read it, made a note or two, returned it to the envelope and refastened it. He sighed again deeply. A dark flush had mounted under the bronze of his skin. He put the letter in his pocket, took up his hat and went out. He looked old.

## CHAPTER XII

DAVIDGE's failure proved to be as disastrous as the few who, like Storey, were in a position to watch his gradual decline, had feared. Succeeding his father as head of the house many years before, his control of its affairs had been absolute and unquestioned and when the crash came, it was found as Pandolfi had said, that the bank was cleaned out. Where its assets had gone, what Davidge had done with them, could never be learned. In the Street, vague rumors were heard, faint whisperings of systematic looting by someone who had gained Davidge's confidence, and Pandolfi's name was guardedly mentioned by a few, also in the Street; but the authorities could find no trace of anything, except evidence of some reckless speculations on Davidge's part which accounted for but a small portion of the losses.

Every effort was made to find Davidge himself, without avail. Foreign ports were watched, rewards were offered, his photograph was sent broadcast to no purpose, and as the weeks wore on without one clue to aid in solving the mystery of his disappearance, the hope that he would ever be found, or that the reason for his failure would ever become known, died gradually, for even his letter to Goeffrey had vanished completely,

although a most thorough search had been made for it.

So Goeffrey found himself with thirty thousand at the bank and nothing else except his personal effects. Half of the money he gave to Richard and after selling his motor car and a few of his exceptionally fine pieces, he took stock of the furnishings of his rooms.

Waters had been snatched away with astonishing quickness by some friend of Goeffrey's, who had long appreciated his talents.

"I hate to sell all this stuff, Dick," he said one day as he was preparing to move to less expensive quarters. He was sitting astride a chair and was fingering a curtain of old green damask. "It's really worth a lot of money."

"Then sell it for a lot and save storage," Dick answered. "Have you had any offers?"

"That's the trouble. I used to have before this beastly smash came, for a lot of it, but now people all seem to have changed their minds."

"They think they can get it for less, I suppose," his cousin replied sententiously. "That's usually the way. It does seem a pity though, because you have got some really good things."

"Good things! I should say I had. Have you ever seen a table to equal that? The one inlaid with tortoise shell and silver? Have you ever seen Wedgewood more beautiful than mine? Have you ever seen a collection of French watches finer than mine, considering its size?"

"Well, don't sell them then, keep them yourself.

Besides, fifteen thousand dollars can be made to last a good while and before that's gone, something may turn up."

"That's what I'll do," Goeffrey answered. "I'll use as much as I can in my new place and have the rest stored."

He got up and began emptying some book shelves, putting the books in a packing box which stood beside them. "By the way," he said presently, "where will you go, when I leave here?"

"I don't know," answered Richard from his place on the sofa. "I'll find a little kennel somewhere."

"Will you come with me — I'd like to have you?"

"Thanks, no, Goeffrey. As they say here, we've got to hustle for ourselves, and I think that we would each get on better alone. By the way, I saw Pandolfi to-day, he told me about a good speculation in stocks."

"Well, don't touch it," said Goeffrey shortly.

"No fear," answered his cousin. "They say you know that he knows something about Davidge's failure."

"I don't doubt it," Goeffrey replied, "but they will never connect him with it, he's too clever."

"Perhaps that explains his dislike of you. Perhaps he hated you because he knew he was ruining you, instead of ruining you, because he hated you."

"I don't think it had anything to do with it one way or the other," Goeffrey answered. "My money happened to be in Mr. Davidge's care, so I lost it as others did theirs."

"It does seem absurd and yet in some of those South-

ern Italians, one will sometimes run across wild primitive traits, even in the educated ones, which have survived through the ages. Take his bringing Nina up here that night. He was jealous of your success with Doris, so he struck back at you."

"Yes, I've heard that," answered Goeffrey, "but I don't believe that Doris was concerned in it in that way — she's nothing to him."

Richard looked at his cousin and smiled oddly, but Goeffrey was busy putting his books carefully in the packing case and did not notice.

"By the way," Richard asked after a moment, "have you seen her lately?"

"Who?"

"Doris."

"Not since that night."

"Really?"

Goeffrey looked up in surprise. "No; why shouldn't I tell you if I had?"

"Nothing — she's very nice, that's all," his cousin answered.

But not long after this Goeffrey did see Doris. He had taken the second floor of an old house on one of the side streets not far from Fifth Avenue. The quarter was undergoing one of those changes in character which happens so frequently in New York and rents were low on short leases.

The large front room he had made into his work shop. Four draughting tables occupied the floor and a quantity of T squares and triangles hung on the

walls in company with numerous photographs of celebrated foreign buildings. A large chest of drawers had been set up in which to keep drawings, and an air of extraordinary cleanness and emptiness pervaded the entire place. The room immediately behind this was to be used for the reception of clients during business hours and as an office for Goeffrey; and at night as a sitting-room or library. Still behind this in an extension, was his bedroom and bath. In his sitting-room he had crowded the chiefest of his treasures and it was here one night soon after he was settled, that Doris came to see him.

He had come in from an early dinner and had been sitting alone, as he had done repeatedly of late, thinking of Nina whom he had not seen since the night of his party. He had tried desperately to do so, but she was obdurate and had finally left town with Aunt Mary and the children, to remain until the excitement which followed her father's failure had passed away. For nearly a month, he had seen no one. Feeling that his former life was of a character which was incompatible with a serious occupation, and as there seemed to him to be no other reasons than social ones, for seeing his friends, he began his professional career by promptly dropping them — and stopping at home evenings. At times he felt very lonely, hoped that every foot on the stairs might mean a visitor, and as he heard them pass his door, indulged in reproachful reflections on the instability of friendship, forgetting that hardly anyone had been told his new address. But most of the time

he thought of Nina, of how he had gained her and lost her — lost her when he had most need of her. How much easier it would be for him now if he could have her sympathy and encouragement. "Love and sympathy," that is what he had offered her. Had she given him either in return? And had there been love and sympathy, would not forgiveness have walked hand in hand with them? Had she chosen the better part — was it quite worthy of a character as noble, as wonderful, as beautiful, as admirable, as hers? But no, he must not reproach her, he had no right, because the fault had been his. But life seemed very hopeless. He looked about him, it was very still in his rooms. How lonely it was. Love, friendship, money, all had gone, nothing was left. Suddenly he heard light steps ascending the stairs quickly, a knock sounded on his door and opening it he saw Doris standing there.

"Alone?" she asked. She came in at once, shut the door herself, locked it and sat down before the fire. She seemed a little out of breath as if she had been hurrying. Goeffrey seized both her hands eagerly.

"Oh, Doris," he said, "how glad, how glad I am to see you."

"Are you surprised?" she asked after a moment.

"Oh, yes! surprised and delighted, more than I can say."

He caught her hands again and they smiled into each other's eyes.

"Are you really glad, Goeffrey?"

"Yes, awfully glad. You see it's rather lonely here

at times. What put it into your head to take pity on me?"

"I don't know, perhaps because I wondered if you needed friends now — do you?"

"I always need friends like you, and then I take it that your coming here is a sign that you have forgiven me."

"Yes, you're forgiven."

"And you are coming often? Everything is to be as it was before? This is even a better place than the other. No danger of people telling tales here. At night the whole building is empty."

Doris flushed.

"Of course I shall not come often, I shall not come at all."

"Oh, Doris, why not?"

Doris jumped up and went quickly to the door. "I am going," she said in a low voice, with her hand on the knob, "you always hurt me."

"But Doris, what have I done, I don't understand?"

"I just stopped here for a moment to see how you were getting on. You are engaged to be married and you ask me to come often. You wouldn't ask any other woman you know to do that here in this house alone. But I don't count."

"Oh!" said Goeffrey, "but didn't you know that everything is ended — that I haven't seen her since that night?"

"Oh, Goeffrey!" exclaimed Doris. "I hadn't heard." And sympathy and compassion sounded suddenly in

her voice. "Forgive me for being so irritable. You see you do need friends — real ones. The others won't bother about you now that you are poor."

"But Miss Davidge isn't like that," answered Goefrey, "she was offended because I —"

"You needn't mind going on," she continued as Goefrey hesitated — "she was offended because you had me there and Irma and Pauline and the others — and just at the time you need help and encouragement, she can think of nothing except the injury to her own feelings. She had an opportunity she couldn't afford to miss, I should say, and so she took advantage of it."

"I won't listen to you, Doris, if you say such things," protested Goeffrey — "they're unjust and unfair."

"They're not," she answered. "I like the other lady, the one who was tall, and beautiful, and delicate, but Miss Davidge looked at us so coldly and haughtily, I tell you she is heartless."

"And you talk about your friendship for me, and can say things like that, Doris — when you must know how it hurts me? — Don't you realize that I have had that same doubt and that if I didn't fight against it, if I accepted it as true, life wouldn't be worth living? And now you come, my friend, and instead of giving me courage, you try to make me lose faith in the woman I love."

Doris did not answer. They had seated themselves before the fire again and she was looking into it from under the brim of her hat. She moved slightly, but did not speak.

"Is that an act of friendship, Doris?" Goeffrey asked.

"It is an act of —" she began and was silent again. Suddenly she turned and held out her hand.

"Forgive me," she said, "I'm sorry."

Goeffrey took it and they sat in this way for some moments. It seemed to him that she looked at him furtively from time to time and that more than once she was on the point of speaking to him.

At last she said, "Are you sure you love her, Goeffrey?"

"Of course," he answered, "of course I'm sure."

After another pause, she drew her hand gently from his and sat straight up in her chair.

"And now," she said in a brisk matter of fact voice, "how are you getting on?"

"Not very well — no commissions yet."

"Aren't your friends giving you anything to do?"

"I haven't seen any of them."

"Oh, Goeffrey! how foolish you are. You *must* see them. They will forget you if you let them."

"Then they're not worth having. They know that I have begun to practice my profession, and if they want to employ me, it's easy enough to find me."

Doris made a gesture of despair.

"Do you mean to say that you haven't even told them where you live?"

"No, I haven't."

"You're a child!" she exclaimed. "That's all, just a child. You need someone to tell you what to do — you must be more enterprising. There are other men

who won't wait to be found; they will go and get work while you are waiting for it to come to you. Don't you see that you must be more like the others?"

"I suppose so," he assented, "but the thought of it is awfully unpleasant somehow. Still — I can't see why I shouldn't make money; other people do, almost everybody — you make it, Doris — you must make a lot, I think — what a charming little gown that is. Are you still in the 'Mermaid?'"

"No," she answered after a moment's hesitation — "that ended a month ago. I'm not doing anything now."

"But you *will* get something of course," Goeffrey replied. "You're such a clever little person."

"I'm not clever, Goeffrey — I'm very nice of course, but I'm an awfully poor actress. It isn't easy for me to get work either."

"Oh, but you must. What would you do if you couldn't be always the same delightful Doris, with your pretty gowns and hats and boots and gloves — it's quite unthinkable."

"Well, you see I have a little income, a very tiny one and that helps." Suddenly she cried, "Oh, Goeffrey! how I should love to take you to my dressmaker in Paris — everything I have comes from her — I must go there soon, somehow. She's a little old woman with a crooked back, but she has the soul of an artist. She loves to make my clothes — because she loves me. She says that I am more *chic* than anyone. Do you think it wicked to love beautiful clothes?"

"Of course it isn't."

"But I love them so much that I couldn't live without them. Oh, Goeffrey! if you could only be in my beautiful, beautiful Paris some day when I am there, I would take you to her. She loves to talk about me, and you would hear from her how good and how nice I am — would you like that?"

"Ah, yes, but Paris seems a long way off now, Doris, we must both work and make money and then we can go there."

Doris clinched her fists and shook them at the ceiling. "Oh! oh! oh! if I were only rich," she said, "if I —" Someone knocked sharply on the door and she started up in terror.

"Wait," said Goeffrey. "Who is it?" he called.

"Mr. Bancroft," said an old man's voice through the door.

"It's all right, Doris, let me let him in — he will never say anything to anyone, then you may go. I assure you it's all right."

"And so the young lady would like to be rich," Mr. Bancroft observed, as Goeffrey introduced him and proceeded to help him off with his overcoat. "Let me advise you, Goeffrey, to have a heavier door put on, that one is much too thin — I hope you will forgive me for intruding, but I promised to deliver a message to Mr. Hunter to-night, if I could, so I came down here on my usual nocturnal prowl. If you are to be in later, Goeffrey, I can stop on my way uptown."

"Oh, please don't," Doris protested. "I was just

going, I had only stopped in to see Goeffrey for a moment and I stayed longer than I had expected to."

"I quite understand," Mr. Bancroft answered with a bow. "There are people whom one always stays longer with than one intends — Goeffrey is one of them and I should not be surprised if you were another."

Doris gave him a brilliant smile and went out on the landing, Goeffrey following her and closing the door after him.

"You don't know how you've cheered me up," he said. "Won't you come again?"

"No," she said, "I won't."

"Please, Doris."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Goeffrey," she answered gravely. "I'll come until you are friends again — do you understand — I mean you and she."

"I understand — that's something anyway — come soon, will you?"

"As soon as I can — and Goeffrey — be a little more practical — run about and see people — you will never get anything to do moping alone here."

"All right, don't worry, I'll be building one of your giants before you know it."

Doris put her hand to her head.

"No! no!" she protested and then she added — "but yes, anything if you can only make money. Good-night."

"Good-night, Doris."

Goeffrey came back, locked the door, sat down before the fire where Mr. Bancroft had already seated him-

self and seemed about to say something, when the old gentleman raised his hand.

"Explanations are quite unnecessary, my dear boy. There are some men whose presence here with that young lady would mean but one thing — you are not one of them."

"Thank you, sir," said Geoffrey.

"But I will tell you who is — that piano playing cousin of yours. I'm going to talk plainly to you, Geoffrey, I hope it won't offend you — what do you know about him?"

"Almost nothing," answered Geoffrey; "until he came here, I had not seen him for years."

"Well, I have been looking a little into the career of Mr. Richard Whitely," the old man went on with a tone of peculiar resentment in his voice, "and I have found that his life abroad, for a number of years, has been that of an idler, a spendthrift, a gambler and a seducer of women. The immediate reason for his coming here was to get away from the wrath of a man whose friendship he had tried to betray."

"He told me about that," interrupted Geoffrey, "but he said that the woman lied to her husband about him, out of pique."

"Did you believe him?"

"Well, no, I didn't, I don't know why exactly," Geoffrey answered.

"No, nor would anybody else," rejoined Mr. Bancroft shortly, "but that is only one incident — I have many

and some day I may make it rather too hot for him to stay here with any sort of comfort."

"But I am sure that Richard isn't bad at heart," said Goeffrey. "The things you mention, many men do. If he hasn't been guilty of anything really criminal, I don't see how you would be justified in repeating scandalous stories about him, sir, really I don't, no matter how true they might be."

"It is true," the old gentleman answered, "that among the men you and I know, there are some who do all the things that I have mentioned, they are our friends sometimes, go where we go, know our women. The first three types do little harm to any except themselves perhaps, but if the seducer of women began to practice his beastly arts on one you loved, began to weave his net of fascination about her, what then?"

"But how —" began Goeffrey.

"You are going to ask how it could concern me, an old man, unmarried, with no ties of kindred — I'll explain, but before I do, let me tell you of a thing that happened not long ago. I was taking my evening walk as I always do, as you know, but on this occasion it was earlier than usual. I have no special route, sometimes I go in one direction, sometimes in another, but on this night I had gone up Broadway and turned West. The quarter I found myself in was rather a dubious one and the street at this point was quite deserted, except that a public cab was waiting close to the curb, about midway in the block. As I reached this point on the

opposite side of the street, a door opened and a man and woman came out, descended the steps quickly, entered the cab and were driven away. A street lamp stood close by the cab and I recognized both. The woman was the wife of a man we both know and her companion, your cousin. I looked at my watch, it was eleven o'clock. The hour and the character of the neighborhood aroused my suspicions and I had certain investigations made which confirmed them. Then it was that I began to look into the past life of your precious cousin. I did this for a certain reason and that was that he had begun to practice his arts on the one woman I cherish and love. Do you know who that is?" and on the latter replying in the negative, he added: "It is Constance."

"Constance," exclaimed Goeffrey, bewildered and indignant. "Oh, Mr. Bancroft! how can you say such a thing about her? You would be the first to resent it if anyone else did."

"And what have I said about her, if you please, that anyone could resent?" he replied, fixing Goeffrey with a threatening look — "What have I said?"

"I think I must have misunderstood you," Goeffrey answered in some confusion. "I would rather not say what I thought you said."

The old gentleman brought his fist down on the arm of his chair.

"I say, sir, that your cousin is practicing his arts on her so that he may marry her. Now do you understand?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Goeffrey.

"Practicing his arts on her in order to marry her — is the thought of it pleasant to you?"

Goeffrey remembered Nina's prediction.

"He isn't good enough for her," he said as he had said once before.

"He's not worthy to touch the hem of her gown," Mr. Bancroft replied. "It must be prevented and I want your assistance. I want you to go to your cousin and suggest that he had better go away — tell him that you have been told that things are known about him that will make it most unpleasant for him here if they are made public. If the source of your information is unknown to him, it may make a deeper impression, and coming as an emissary of someone else, it will be easier for you. You are friends, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, but suppose that he refuses to go?"

"Let him take the consequences. I knew her when she was a child. I saw her grow to womanhood and beauty. I watched the wretchedness of her life with Aladine and now I mean to save her from a marriage which would make her even more unhappy." Mr. Bancroft rose and walked toward the door, tottering a little as he went — "See him at once," he said.

"I will see him to-morrow," said Goeffrey, "but I am not very hopeful. The only answer one usually gets in such cases, is an invitation to mind one's own business."

"Never mind. Tell him and let me know the result."

Goeffrey assisted him on with his overcoat and accompanied him downstairs. On the way down the old

man mumbled softly as if talking to himself. He paused on the stoop. "In a month the town will be empty — no time to lose. See him at once." He turned toward Fifth Avenue but after a few steps he stopped. "I forgot to tell you that Constance wants to see you tomorrow afternoon about four. Try to see your cousin first. I may be there, at Constance's, I mean, and you can tell me what he has to say." He went on again, but in a moment came back to where Goeffrey was standing. "Remember," he said threateningly, "I'll have no mercy on him. If I tell a certain man here what I know, I fancy your cousin will go back to Europe in as great a hurry as he left it a few months ago."

## CHAPTER XIII

DORIS came down the steps from Goeffrey's rooms and stood for a moment in hesitation. The month was May but there was a chill in the air and the wind blew through the cross streets in sharp gusts. The occasional street lights showed undimmed through an atmosphere which seemed but lately to have been washed with rain, and between the dark clouds which floated high in the heavens, stars could be seen shining remote but clear.

She stood for a moment on the pavement and smiled to herself — the cool night wind, the clear air, the shining stars and her little visit with Goeffrey, produced an elation which she did not often feel. As a sort of good-by, she pictured him in his room, as he had looked not long before with his expression of eager delight on seeing her and she smiled again, a smile half tender, half protecting.

She seemed uncertain at first what direction to take, but finally, with a quick look about her, turned and walked rapidly toward Broadway. Although she looked from side to side repeatedly, the block was a long one and midway between the avenues badly lighted, and she did not notice, until he was close to her, that a man had crossed the street for the purpose of intercepting her. When she was almost upon him, she saw him

and knew at the same moment that it was Pandolfi. She stopped with an involuntary gesture of dismay, and her hand went quickly to her heart. Pandolfi went swiftly up to her, with his active and noiseless stride, and seized her wrist.

"So! I have caught you," he said in a cold and sneering tone. "You liar! Is this the way you keep your promises to me?"

Doris stood terrified — she did not answer him and her face looked very pale.

"Answer me," he demanded.

"Ernesto, you hurt me," she replied in a low voice.

"Answer me," he repeated in the same cruel and sneering tone. "Are you supporting that pauper with the money I give you?"

"Ernesto, you hurt me, I will not talk to you here — take me home and I will answer you."

"You liar," he said again. He started toward Broadway still keeping tight hold of her wrist and glancing around from time to time in search of a cab.

"Ernesto — please — you hurt me," she repeated, but at that moment a motor cab responded to his signal and drew up to the curb. Pandolfi thrust her into it, gave the chauffeur a number and got in himself. The cab started and turned up Broadway. Doris sat far back in the corner in silence. From time to time, with a trembling hand, she put her small handkerchief to her eyes. She saw on each side of her, moving past the windows of the cab, the cheap and vulgar panorama of





the street. The dirt, the roar, the tawdry lights. A din of conflicting sounds smote the ear, the metal clang of gongs, blasts of motor horns, the grinding of steel wheels on steel grooves, the clash of hoofs, shouts, cries. A kind of dust hung in the air, one could not have seen the clear stars here. One could see nothing except the ostentatious display of hotels, theaters and restaurants; light, colors, movements, crowds, moving in the kaleidoscope of an ignorant and vulgar phantasmagoria. The expression of an uneducated and cynical materialism; self satisfied and crude. And this was her life, Doris thought to herself — a life of the theaters, the restaurants, of late hours, of fatigue, of ennui, of emptiness. A life that meant nothing, led nowhere; and she thought again of Goeffrey as expressing something quite different from the other men and women she knew. From the very first, he had appealed to her, because something made him different from the others, more quiet, more human. Something gentle and also fastidious — something honest, friendly and sincere. Things which she was conscious of having herself and which she felt she craved in someone else. As if in listening to some orchestral composition which seemed nothing but a concatenation of jumbled discords deafening and meaningless, she had detected running through it, one pure and charming melody, spontaneous and gay, which her ear eagerly sought for amid the confused hubbub which smote it.

The cab moved swiftly up Broadway, until it had left the hotels and theaters behind, and turning down

a side street, stopped before a small house built of some light colored stone. A maid opened the door and Doris went at once to the drawing-room which was up one flight and where Pandolfi presently joined her.

Pandolfi, without taste, felt himself in an atmosphere which it would have been beyond his power to create when he was in Doris's house, and he never entered it without a feeling of admiration for her — and a realization that she belonged to that class of women who were what he called ladies. He had no respect for and no fear of Doris, because he neither respected nor feared anyone, but he knew that there were knowledges, aspirations and feelings in her which were quite beyond him and her house illustrated this to him simply and convincingly. He sat down and with a rapid movement threw one leg across the other and seized its ankle. Doris stood with her back toward him, resting her forehead on a hand which grasped the mantel-shelf. He could see that she trembled. Pandolfi's ill humor seemed to have abated somewhat.

“Well, what were you doing there?”

The brutality of his manner had disappeared and he seemed puzzled as if by an action on her part which was inexplicable to him, and as she did not answer, he said again, “What were you doing there?” and added, “What can you see in that *imbécile*?” and then as he still received no reply, he suddenly raised his voice and shouted, “Answer me!”

Doris turned quickly to a chair and sat down in it suddenly, as if her knees had given way beneath her.

Her eyes were red and her cheeks stained with traces of tears.

"I like him," she answered simply.

Pandolfi's sneer came back. "Oh!" he said, "you like him," he spoke very slowly, pausing between each word, "is it, for example, a platonic liking?"

It seemed difficult for Doris to speak and he repeated his question.

"Oh, Ernesto," she answered, "what is the use, you wouldn't understand."

"Never mind, whether I would understand or not. Is it a platonic liking then?"

"Yes, I like him, Ernesto, that's all."

"You like him platonically then. Does he like you in the same way—platonically?" he continued, still with his sneering tone.

"I suppose so, Ernesto, I don't know."

"Did you ever know of any man to care for any woman platonically, much less a woman of your class?"

"Oh, Ernesto," she answered in a low voice, "*you* should not say that to me."

"I shall say what I please to you, and you will answer my questions. Do you think that any man ever cared platonically for a woman like you?"

"He does not know," she answered in the same low voice.

"Does not know what?"

"That I am what you say."

"Ah!" cried Pandolfi, getting quickly to his feet, "then I will tell him."

Doris rose too and faced him — as she had said, violence terrified her, took her strength away, but by a supreme effort she regained her self-control and suddenly she turned on him with rage in her eyes, like some animal at bay.

“Ernesto,” she said with suppressed fury in her voice, “I intend never to allow you to intimidate me again, never, do you understand? I have always feared you and you knew it and profited by it. I feared you to-night, but there was no reason to — shall I tell you why?”

“What do you mean?” Pandolfi answered, surprised by her manner.

“Do you remember the night of Goeffrey’s party, when you so cruelly brought those women into his rooms?”

“Well, what of it?”

“I saw you do something that night which no one else saw.”

“What do you mean?” he said again, mystified.

“I saw you take the letter which Miss Davidge brought there.”

“Well?”

“And I have it.”

Pandolfi made a quick step toward her.

“You stole it from me,” he said.

“Yes, I stole it, I stole it, and you will never, never see it again.”

“Give it to me,” he demanded threateningly.

"Not if you should torture me — kill me — tear me to pieces, you will never get it."

Pandolfi seized her wrists, pushed her back in her chair and began to twist them, turning them slowly away from each other. Neither spoke. They struggled in silence, Doris making convulsive but futile efforts to release her arms which were being bent more and more cruelly.

"Give it to me," he said between his teeth.

"No."

"Give it to me," he repeated. He kept bending them farther and farther over until it seemed as if he must break them.

"No," was all she would answer.

Suddenly she screamed, "Ernesto!" and her head fell limply on her shoulder. She had fainted. Pandolfi picked her up without effort, laid her on a sofa, sprinkled her face with water and went quickly to her bedroom whence he returned with a bottle of sal volatile which he put to her nostrils. After a moment, her breast rose spasmodically once or twice and she opened her eyes. Pandolfi had already mixed some brandy and water.

"Take this," he said, putting an arm under her shoulders.

Pandolfi sat down and watched her. She lay quite still with closed eyes. He could see that the color was returning to her face, but her breathing seemed more and more irregular until all at once she turned slightly,

buried her face in her hands and began to weep; quietly but terribly, with mournful, heartbroken, despairing sobs — as if life were a burden too heavy for her, too bitter, too hopeless. Pandolfi sat on the other side of the room unmoved. After a time her sobs grew less convulsive, less frequent and at last stopped. Pandolfi turned his head and saw that she was looking at him. He got up, went to the sofa and standing over her he said again:

“Give it to me.”

“No, Ernesto,” she answered faintly.

He turned and began ransacking the room, turning out drawers, looking in books, behind pictures, in closets. At last he came back to her.

“Listen,” he said, “I mean to have that letter — I will torture you until I get it. Will you give it to me?”

“Never, Ernesto,” and she held out her wrists to him, “torture me if you like — I will never give it to you,” and as he seized them she looked straight at him, straight into his eyes as he began to twist them again — with a curious expression. Soft, terrified, dauntless and beseeching.

Suddenly Pandolfi threw her wrists from him with an oath and dropped into a chair. Doris sat up on the sofa. “Give me some brandy, Ernesto,” she said faintly, “I want to talk to you.” Pandolfi got up without a word, gave it to her and sat down again and then as she did not speak he said:

“Why did you take that letter?”

"I took it because you had no right to it. That night when Miss Davidge brought it in and laid it on the table, I saw that you were dismayed, and when Goeffrey struck you and you reeled back against the table, I saw what no one else saw, that you covered the letter with one of your hands, and that when you moved away the letter was not there. I made up my mind to get it. We went downstairs to your rooms afterwards, and I saw you, as we went in, thrust your hand into the pocket of your great coat which hung by the door. I thought it probable that you had held the letter crumpled in your hand all that time and that you put it in your coat pocket to get rid of it until you had a chance to read it. I found it there. I had only one reason, Ernesto, for taking it, and that was on account of Goeffrey. Somehow in a way I couldn't understand, you had been the cause of Goeffrey's ruin."

"One moment," interrupted Pandolfi. "I had nothing whatever to do with Hunter's ruin, as you call it, in any way, why should I?"

"You didn't like him."

"Please! please!" Pandolfi held up his hand with one of his Italian gestures, "talk like a sensible person and not like a fool. That sort of logic is too silly. In some extraordinary way I cause Davidge to fail so that Hunter may lose his money — simply because I didn't like him. Oh, no, business isn't done like that. Hunter is nothing to me. If he gets in my way, or tries to appropriate my property, I will rap his knuckles — but to commit a crime and put myself in

danger of prison, because I don't like a man, is ridiculous. He had been asking you to his rooms, and to pay him back, I took Miss Davidge there that night to teach him to let my property alone, but as for the other thing, it's absurd. Hunter, very foolishly, had his money in an unsafe concern and when the smash came, he lost it."

"Then why were you so anxious to have that letter, Ernesto?"

"Because, Davidge was crazy; stark, staring mad, and God knows what insane accusations he may have made in it. Come, let me see it."

"No."

"Have you given it to him already?"

"No."

"Why not, if you took it for his sake?"

Doris did not reply.

"Come," said Pandolfi, "let's look into this. It is fair to presume that this letter was an important one to Hunter, both because of the circumstances under which it was written, and the manner of its delivery. You understood this fully at the time and it was because of it and for Hunter's sake that you stole it from me — and you still have it. It looks to me as if you took it to serve your own ends, just as you have accused me of doing. If you took it for his sake, why haven't you given it to him?"

"From a feeling of loyalty to you, Ernesto. I think it would have done you great harm if Goeffrey had got that letter and I think so now, no matter what

you say. I knew if I did not get it that you would destroy it and I wanted time to think about it. It was very difficult — and I have no real excuse — Goeffrey should have had it at once — that was the only reason — but I have another now —” she paused.

“What is it?” Pandolfi asked.

“You said that you were going to tell Goeffrey about me. If you do — I will give it to him.”

“That is a bargain, then? So long as I say nothing, you will keep the letter?”

“Not even that, Ernesto. There will be no bargain now.”

Doris had spoken throughout in a calm, almost listless tone. She was plainly exhausted, but Pandolfi felt that something indomitable had risen up in her, which would make threats, violence, entreaty — all useless.

“No,” she went on, “there will be no bargains. I like Goeffrey very much. It does me good to see him, and I intend to — not often, but he is friendly and kind and sometimes I shall go there for a little while and then, finally, I may send him his letter. I can’t tell yet, when I will send it or even if I shall send it at all, but if I do, I will tell you.”

Pandolfi, infuriated by her calmness and by the realization that he was completely helpless, that he had lost that control which by means of his exacting and violent nature he had always had over her, sprang to his feet.

“And so this is my reward — this — this — is what

you give me in return for all that I have done for you, for all you owe me."

Doris looked at him with an expression half sad, half contemptuous.

"Do I owe you so very much, Ernesto? Think — do I? It does not seem so to me. At times you have been kind to me — when it wasn't too much trouble. But do you think that even if you tried all your life you could make reparation for what you did to me? For that cruel deception — that pretended marriage — when I knew so little — trusted you so wholly? When you told me it was too late — for me. Many, many times I have wished that I had killed myself — and I tried — you know that. Afterwards you were, I thought, sorry for what you had done and I tried to forgive you, but you weren't really sorry. You made promises to me then and you broke them, and after that I didn't care. But that I owe you anything, No! And that I shall be your slave, that I shall be a prisoner any longer, No! I will not have you spy on me and I shall not be accountable to you for every step I take, every word I say —"

Pandolfi jumped to his feet again, seized his hat and coat, and came close to her; his features were distorted by that cruel look one sometimes saw on them.

"Very well," he said, "you have the upper hand now — but wait — it will not always be so. Listen to what I have to tell you — and take fair warning. The day you send that letter to Hunter, I will kill you."

He went out slamming the door after him. Doris

got up, tottered to it, locked it and threw herself on the sofa again. She lay quite still for so long, that one might have supposed her asleep. She was thinking of the past — of how at eighteen, from a life of comfort, of sheltered care, she had found herself through death, alone in London, almost penniless. She thought of her efforts — her struggles to live, her early life on the stage and then how Pandolfi had come into it with his money, his magnificence, just when it seemed too difficult for her, too hard, too hopeless — a life of cheap lodgings, of hunger even, of intermittent engagements — of rebuffs, of insults, of penury and cold, and how Pandolfi had come and shown her the other side — shown her the ease that she had known before, the luxury she loved — all the things her sensitive and refined temperament made her hungry for, and how he had offered them to her and through a base and heartless deception, by means of a spurious marriage he had accomplished his purpose. She thought of his confession to her long after and of how at that moment death had seemed to be all that was left for her. She shuddered as she remembered her sensations under the influence of the opiate she had taken. She remembered Pandolfi's apparently sincere contrition after she had been saved only by heroic efforts and how he had promised her that he would really marry her if she would only live. She remembered how she had accepted that promise never doubting, through a certain credulity and innocence of character which was inherent in her and which she would never lose, that he would keep it,

and how soon the realization came to her that he had lied to her — did not intend to keep it — and how with a sort of dull and hopeless resignation she had accepted that which seemed inevitable to her. She thought of her life with him — of how, though he had not stinted her the luxuries she craved, his capricious and angry nature had made the price she paid for them too great, but how through a tenderness of heart, hidden under that mask of sullenness and indifference which made loving a necessity, she had tried to care for him, until Goeffrey came and had made her realize once more all the falsity of her position. She thought of her visits to his rooms, the avidity with which she looked forward to them, treasured the memories of them, because of their frank and honest friendliness and of how she had suffered when he had made her that equivocal and thoughtless proposal, because she realized that no matter what kindness, what consideration he had shown her, he had looked on her as one of those women to whom such things could be said. But how she had loved those little visits to him where until then, no word had ever been spoken that could not have been said to her before — before she had become what she was. And yet even if he did not know of her relations with Pandolfi, he could not be blamed. He knew her life — the life of the theaters and restaurants, her friends — their gayeties, their frivolities, — how could she blame him.

And then the letter — why had she not given it to him? She had often asked herself this question. There were three reasons. A slight feeling of loyalty

to Pandolfi, her fear of him, and the fact that she had not the courage to face poverty again. This was at first — but as time went on, these reasons ceased to satisfy her. The letter was Goeffrey's, that was all — it was his — he must have it; come what may — and that very night she had gone to give it to him. How easy it would have been for Pandolfi to have got it if he had known — but when she got there, another reason had presented itself and she had not done so. Miss Davidge had not seen him and by the light of her natural antagonism toward her, she had attributed her refusal to the fact that Goeffrey's fortunes had changed for the worse. From Pandolfi's eagerness to possess it — from Miss Davidge's estimate of its importance, an estimate shown by her determination to deliver it, even under most unusual conditions, Doris believed that it must contain a message of great consequence to him, even to the restoration of the fortune he had lost — and she could not, when brought suddenly face to face with the situation, bring herself to do a thing which she was convinced would give Goeffrey to her rival. Not that she could hope for more than to see him, to be with him from time to time, that was all — but it was so much to her that she could not give it up — his friendship was precious — it was all she had. How hard life was, how terrible, how relentless. But that was not the point, the point was that the letter was his, that he should have it, that she was a thief in keeping it — that it did not matter whether Pandolfi killed her or not, whether he drove her into the streets or not,

whether it gave Goeffrey to a woman she hated or not, it was his and he must have it. But was that the point after all? Ah! no, the point was that she loved him, loved him with all her heart, with all her strength, with all her capacity for loving, and because of that she would never give it to him, she would keep him poor so that that other woman would not want him, and if he were poor, who knows — perhaps — perhaps —

## CHAPTER XIV

GOEFFREY, while dressing the next morning, was interrupted by his office boy who thrust a card into his hand when he had opened the door, on which was printed, from an engraved plate, the words:

MR. ISADORE ECKSTEIN.

Goeffrey looked at it eagerly — perhaps this means work, he thought. “Does he look like a client?” he asked Theodore the boy.

“A what?” asked Theodore.

Goeffrey finished dressing in short order, gulped down his coffee which he made himself in the mornings, and went into his office. A small Jew was seated there whose face seemed vaguely familiar to him.

“I see that you don’t remember me,” the Jew said, rising and bowing, “but I spent a very pleasant evening at your apartment at the Kenworthy, not many months ago. I came there with Mr. Pandolfi.”

Goeffrey remembered him then, but his greeting was not particularly cordial. In the first place, his idea of a pleasant evening and Mr. Eckstein’s were very different he thought, and the latter seemed lacking in delicacy in mentioning it to him. In addition the fact that Mr. Eckstein was a friend of Pandolfi’s, was far

from being a recommendation. The Jew saw that he had made a mistake and hastened to add:

"But I came here on a matter of business. Have you a few minutes to spare?"

Goeffrey hesitated.

"Let me ask you," he said, "are you associated in business in any way with Pandolfi? Because if you are, I'm afraid that —"

Mr. Eckstein interrupted him.

"It isn't necessary to say anything more. I understand you perfectly. No, I am not — I value my business reputation too highly," and he added — "but I think that what I have to say may interest you — if you can give me a minute or two —"

"Sit down," answered Goeffrey.

Mr. Eckstein sat down, curled his mustache, rested one hand on an arm of his chair so that Goeffrey would be able to see a very large and brilliant diamond he wore on it, and said:

"I want to sell you some property."

"Me?" exclaimed Goeffrey.

"Yes, I want to sell you some property for improvement."

"Do you mean to build on?"

"Exactly."

"But you must know that I have no money," Goeffrey answered, "even to buy land, much less to build buildings."

"You won't need any money, or very little to buy it, and I will lend you the money to build on it."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said Goeffrey politely, "could you explain a little; just what you mean?"

"No doubt you are surprised — because I, a stranger, come to you," Mr. Eckstein answered, "and make you such a proposition off-hand — but my business is the buying and selling of property. I am not an agent you understand — I buy property myself — or through agents as the case may be. Two-thirds of New York has been built on just the plan I propose to explain to you — and many men, who are millionaires now, have made their money in just this way with almost no capital to begin with — and anyone else can do it with brains and application — allow me —"

Mr. Eckstein drew his chair up to Goeffrey's table, took a sheet of paper and drew a diagram on it.

"This is its location," he said to Goeffrey, who got up and looked over his shoulder, "a corner property — fifty feet wide on the side street and extending for one hundred feet down the avenue. The location is an ideal one for an apartment house. I will sell you the land for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, taking a very small cash payment, retaining the rest on mortgage, and will loan you the money to build, securing the money I loan you in this way, by mortgages on the building as it progresses."

"But I don't see," said Goeffrey, "how I would benefit by it. It seems to me that I would be virtually building a building for you. I might be the ostensible owner, but you would be the real one and I would have

no interest in it at all, beyond the small sum which I would pay at first, but which I assume from what you say, would be so insignificant when compared to the whole cost as to amount to nothing? ”

“ Your argument is good,” said Mr. Eckstein, “ so far as it goes, but I think I can show you its weakness. I offer you my land at one hundred and fifty thousand — that is its intrinsic value — if you can make that land earn enough money so that it can pay you a fair rate of interest on more, then you have increased its value by just so much. Do you follow me? ”

“ I think so,” said Goeffrey.

“ It is the same way with the building. You assemble a quantity of materials — bricks, stone, mortar, iron and the like, the market value of which is another hundred and fifty thousand — but if by assembling them into a building so that they can earn money and pay a fair rate of interest, say on two hundred thousand, you have increased their value by fifty thousand dollars — ”

“ I see,” said Goeffrey — “ my profit would come in in the increase in value which would result in bringing all these things together.”

“ Exactly — but let us go into it a little more in detail — you are sure that I am not keeping you? ”

“ Oh, no,” said Goeffrey, “ it is quite interesting.”

“ My own idea as to the proper improvement for this land,” Mr. Eckstein went on, “ is a building containing housekeeping flats — high-class you know — but of various sizes, from small to large, so that you could suit

all tastes and incomes. The beauty of a housekeeping flat is the small amount of money required to run it — you get your heat from the steam pipes in the street, your electricity from the street mains and all you need is a boy to run the elevator. I would only make it six stories high for the reason that it would be unnecessary then to make a fireproof structure — that's the law you know — and it would be cheaper, but I calculate that you could get five apartments on a floor with a total rental of six thousand dollars — six floors at six thousand — thirty-six thousand a year — do you realize what that means? ”

“The interest on a lot of money I should say,” responded Goeffrey.

“Exactly — six per cent. on six hundred thousand dollars,” said Eckstein triumphantly, “but wait — that's gross — deduct nine thousand from that for running expenses, taxes, insurance rates and the like and you have a net income of twenty-seven thousand a year or six per cent. on four hundred and fifty thousand —”

“But you still virtually own it,” said Goeffrey.

“Yes, but don't you see — when your building is completed, it, with the land based on its earning power, which after all fixes the value of everything, is worth at a conservative estimate, four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Any insurance company will loan you two-thirds of its value — at five per cent. and you pay me off — that's what they call ‘borrowing out.’ You've got then, an equity of one hundred and fifty

thousand in it and an income of twenty-seven thousand a year. You pay fifteen thousand a year as interest on your mortgage and you have for yourself, an income of twelve thousand dollars. How's that?"

"But there's one thing I can't understand about it," said Goeffrey.

"What?"

"It seems to be such a good thing — why don't you do it yourself?"

Eckstein laughed heartily — and tapped Goeffrey's knee with the finger on which the diamond was displayed.

"That's the way to talk," he said. "I can see that you've got a business head on your shoulders. I'll tell you why; it's not in my line — I am a speculator in real estate and nothing else — I make a good profit if I sell the land and to facilitate its sale, I offer to lend money to build on it. I get six per cent. for that too, because that's what I'll charge you for the use of it."

"Still, I don't see,—" began Goeffrey.

"No; but if you had had more business experience, you would see what I mean," Eckstein interrupted. "The men who make money, are the men who stick to things they understand. Do you suppose I'd go into Wall Street with a thing like that? Take Storey, for instance, who has so much money it keeps him lying awake nights to know what to do with it. If I should go to him and explain it to him as I have to you — I know what he'd say beforehand — he'd say, 'Mr. Eckstein, your scheme is a good one, sound and business-

like, but it's out of my line,' — and he'd be right too."

"Do you know Mr. Storey?" asked Goeffrey irrelevantly.

"I know him!" exclaimed Mr. Eckstein, as if he could hardly believe his ears — "don't I wish I did. Well," he added, getting up, "think it over. There's another thing to be considered — you would be in a better position than most people in going into a thing of this kind — because you'd save the architect's fees. That was what first made me think of you."

"Would you take any less for the land?" asked Goeffrey, who had heard that a seller always asks more than he expects to get and that the purchaser offers less than he expects to pay — why, he could never understand.

"Not a penny," answered Eckstein positively.

"Well, how much money down would you want?"

Mr. Eckstein sat down again.

"Look here," he said, "let's be open and above board, how much have you got?"

"About twenty thousand dollars," answered Goeffrey.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I had intended to ask you fifteen thousand, but I don't want to take all you've got, besides it might be of use to you if you go ahead with it, so I'll take five thousand and the land is yours —"

"Of course, I shall have to think it over," said Goeffrey.

"Of course, think it over. Go up and look at the

property. But it's a great chance. A year's hard work and you own a property that is paying you twelve thousand a year — at the least. It may not be as much as you had before, but it's a whole lot better than nothing. But I will come and see you again."

"Yes, do," Goeffrey answered; "you see it's all very new to me, but as you talked I made some memoranda, and I'll study them a bit. Come again in about a week and perhaps I shall have made up my mind."

Mr. Eckstein went out, but in a moment he was back again.

"By the way," he said, "when you go up there you will notice that the excavations have already been made, and you know that that's a big item in itself. The man who sold it to me, had it done because he had intended to build, but he went broke in the Street and so he had to sell instead. Well, good-by — I'll see you in a week."

Goeffrey sat down, his head in a whirl. This seemed the royal road to fortune indeed. It must be admitted that his confidence in his ability to make money had been sadly shaken of late. He had made one or two attempts to secure commissions for work which he knew was to be gone ahead with, but there always seemed to be someone else who was able to wrest them from him, he could not tell why. The money he had in the bank seemed such a pitiful sum, that at times when unduly depressed, he felt that there was little between himself and starvation. But with twelve thousand a year,

really it wouldn't be bad. To be sure it was much less than his former income, but with a little economy — no motor — he could marry and live very well on it. They could reserve one of the apartments for themselves and arrange it just as they would like it to be — he could even buy his clothes at some ready made shop, but he was afraid Nina might not like that. Oh, if he could only see her and tell her about it. He must explain to Constance when he saw her that afternoon, how important it was and beg her to arrange it — really he must see her — it was impossible that things should go on as they were, any longer. He lunched at the one club where he still retained membership, and was already on his way uptown to look at Eckstein's property, when it suddenly occurred to him that he had promised Mr. Bancroft that he would see Richard before he went to Constance's and he hurried back again. He knew that he was almost certain to find his cousin, because he rarely went out until late in the afternoon, but as he approached Richard's place of abode, he relished less and less the errand which took him there. He disliked meddling with other people's affairs — and he could not bring himself to believe that Constance would ever consider Richard as a matrimonial possibility. However, he had promised Mr. Bancroft, so he must do his best. He found his cousin attired in a dressing gown of richly colored silk, drinking his coffee, and reading a novel. He had taken a small suite in a smart apartment house for bachelors, just off Fifth Avenue, and with some furniture which

Goeffrey had lent him he had succeeded in making a brave display.

"This is very nice," Goeffrey remarked, looking about him, "you have arranged things very well indeed." But suddenly he darted to the table at Richard's elbow and picked up a small plate—"But I say, you're using a piece of my Lowestoft for an ash tray—that won't do."

Richard laughed—"All right," he said, "put it away. How's the business?"

"Looking up a little, I think," Goeffrey answered as he sat down—and then plunging into the matter in hand, he said: "I've come on a rather unpleasant errand."

Richard looked up in surprise.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Well—it's about yourself and Mrs. Aladine."

"Mrs. Aladine," said Richard, apparently in still greater surprise. "What on earth can you mean?"

"I was asked to come here and remonstrate with you—in fact to do more than that—to warn you. Of course, Dick, you understand that it's all very unpleasant for me—but I thought that I might be doing you a good turn too."

"Well, please explain, will you," exclaimed Richard, "and leave off beating about the bush—what is it?"

"Very well, then—a certain person came and told me that it was your intention to marry Mrs. Aladine if you could. This person came to me last night and asked me to see you. He told me that he knew certain

things about you — had in fact been looking you up abroad and here too, for that matter and — but look here, Dick,” said Goeffrey, interrupting himself, “this is awfully unpleasant, I don’t feel like going on.”

“Indeed you shall!” exclaimed Richard, “what’s the rest of it?”

“Well, you remember your trouble with Lady Stanley, when you came over here. He knew about that, and other things, things here too, or one thing, at least, and other things abroad. He has Mrs. Aladine’s welfare very much at heart and he is bitterly prejudiced against you —”

“Go ahead,” said Richard as Goeffrey paused again.

“He is prejudiced against you and he wants you to keep away from Mrs. Aladine and in fact go away; go abroad or anywhere and stay there.”

“And if I don’t?”

“He will tell a certain man here something that he knows about your relations with that man’s wife.”

For a few minutes Richard was silent. His face had flushed as Goeffrey was speaking and he seemed both perplexed and infuriated.

“Did Mr. Storey ask you to do this?” he asked at length.

“No,” Goeffrey answered, “he didn’t.”

“I could hardly have thought so but I know who it was — it was that damned old fool Bancroft. Wasn’t it?”

“I shan’t tell you,” Goeffrey replied.

“All right, you needn’t — but I know it was. He’s

forever meddling in her affairs — sitting about as if he owned the place and pouring down tea by the quart. Why can't he mind his own business? But what is this, an ultimatum?"

"Something of that sort, I suppose."

"If I won't agree, he will probably go straight to Mrs. Aladine. It's hard, Goeffrey; I know I've done things I shouldn't — I don't know that Mrs. Aladine would marry me even if I should ask her — but I like her. I wouldn't want her to think ill of me — but as for getting away; he's in downright earnest, is he?"

"I should say so," Goeffrey answered, "very much in earnest."

"But pulling out like this, just as I am settled — Must he know at once?"

"I think he expects to."

Richard was silent again.

"Will you do this," he said at last. He paused again. "He wants me to promise that I shall see nothing of Mrs. Aladine in the future and leave New York. If I don't, he will tell something which he professes to know about me? But the thing is so unexpected, I am settled here with no intention of leaving, I've got to have time to think it over — I'm not at all sure that I shall pay any attention whatever to him — and I shall not answer now at any rate." Richard paused again. "Tell him," he continued, "that I shall let him know in three days — to-day is Thursday — on Sunday he shall have my answer. But during that time he must keep quiet. Unless he promises that, I shall refuse to

do anything — I'll fight him. He's given me his ultimatum and here's mine. I will let him know in three days, but only on condition that he promises to say nothing to anybody. Will you see him to-day?"

"This afternoon," Goeffrey answered.

"Then telephone me — I shall wait until I hear from you."

Goeffrey got up.

"Good-by," he said, "no hard feelings, I hope."

"Don't be an ass," was all Richard answered, and Goeffrey remembered afterwards that he thought his cousin concealed a smile as he turned away.

It was half past four when he reached the street and signaling a motor cab, he gave the chauffeur Constance's number and got in. On reaching there, he was shown into the small parlor in which Mr. Bancroft and Richard had waited for Mrs. Aladine.

"Mrs. Aladine and Mr. Storey are having a business meeting upstairs," Jacob explained, as he took his hat and coat, "but I don't think that they will be much longer."

Goeffrey sat down and waited. He had not been in the house since the day when Pandolfi had come there with his announcement of Davidge's failure, the day when he had had Nina's answer. It was in this very room that he had found her with Constance when he had followed them out of the library. He remembered vividly that they were sitting on the sofa and that Nina, while not crying, looked very pale — and that when they got up to go upstairs, she had said not to

worry — that she would be all right in no time. What a fool, what a double, triple fool he had been, to allow himself to be placed in such a position — he had not had resolution enough to assume the obligations of his new relationship at once, but must shirk them because he was too lazy or too selfish to put off something that promised a few hours' enjoyment. Well, he had got what he deserved and very quickly. He heard the rustle of skirts in the hall. He wondered why Mrs. Aladine had sent for him. He must get her to promise to use all of her influence in his behalf, so that an interview might be arranged. The rustle of skirts drew nearer and he got up and Nina herself stood in the doorway.

Goeffrey stared at her in a state of complete stupefaction for a moment, and then his arms were around her and she was trying to push him away without any success and he was repeating, "Oh, Nina, Nina!" over and over again.

"And now," she said, as soon as she could catch her breath between Goeffrey's assaults, "you've kissed me quite enough for the present, the door is wide open and Jacob will be scandalized."

"Oh! Nina, Nina."

"Did you really care for me so much, Goeffrey?"

"Oh! Nina, Nina."

He was beside himself with delight.

"Aren't you glad to see me," he said at last, "and have you forgiven me?"

"Yes, Goeffrey dear, both, but let's not talk about

that, because I was silly and headstrong so that it was as much my fault as yours. And have you missed me?"

"Missed you! I have been absolutely and completely miserable — I haven't been anywhere, seen anyone, just stayed at home and thought about you and longed for you — when I moved I didn't tell anybody where I was because I didn't want to see them."

"You have moved?"

"Oh, yes, to a cheaper place, but it's quite good enough."

"And is it true that my father's letter was never found?"

"Not a trace of it."

"But someone must have taken it then."

Goeffrey shrugged his shoulders — "Evidently! but whom? I believe Pandolfi, for instance, capable of anything and possibly interested in my not getting it, but what proof have I?" Then turning to her and taking both her hands he added: "but let's not talk about that. I am so absolutely happy again, that I can talk about you and nothing else. How did you come to decide to forgive me and to see me again?"

"Constance talked to me often about it and finally she showed me how stubborn and hateful it was of me and how selfish. Oh, Goeffrey, she is a good woman — and I have been hateful to her too."

"Oh! Nina dear, you never could; to anyone."

"Yes, I have — I have been so worried about her and Richard." Nina got up and shut the door. "Do you know," she continued, returning to her seat and low-

ering her voice to a whisper, "she is infatuated with him — mad about him — I have never seen anything like it — and it's such a pity, when I think of Constance — a woman like that — throwing herself away on a man like Richard — it infuriates me to know that I can't do anything and that's why I've been hateful to her. I couldn't help showing her how I have felt about it — and Goeffrey, you know what a wonderful kind of delicate beauty she has anyway. Well, it has absolutely transfigured her. She's quite the most beautiful woman I've ever seen." A rap sounded on the door and Nina jumped up. "It's Mr. Bancroft," she said, "come in."

Mr. Bancroft shut the door, drew a chair up to the sofa and addressed Goeffrey.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"Yes; and came here at once."

"What did he say?"

"He wants three days to think it over."

Mr. Bancroft turned to Nina.

"When I saw Goeffrey last night," he explained, "I asked him to go to his cousin and tell him that unless he promised not to see Mrs. Aladine again, and agreed to leave New York at once, I would make known certain things about him which have come to my knowledge."

"Do you think that Constance intends to marry him?" Goeffrey asked.

"What her present intention is, I don't know — but if he continues to see her, that will be the inevitable

result," answered Mr. Bancroft, then he added: "he promised to answer in three days?"

"Yes, but on one condition — that you will not speak of the things you threaten to speak of to anyone, during that time."

"That will give him an opportunity to forestall you with Constance," said Nina. "I think it was a mistake to give him any warning."

"I did it, my dear," replied Mr. Bancroft, "because I felt sure that Constance would never allow herself to believe anything at all against him. The things I know about Whitely are of no use as far as Constance is concerned — so I felt forced to see what effect they would have on him. Were you to let him know?"

"Yes, I was to telephone him."

"Very well," said Mr. Bancroft, "telephone him that I will give him three days, provided he promises on his part, to hold no communication with Mrs. Aladine during that time. There is a telephone closet just outside the door."

Goeffrey went out, returning in five minutes with the announcement that Richard had accepted Mr. Bancroft's terms.

"Did he hesitate at all before doing so?" the old man asked.

"Not at all," answered Goeffrey, "he seemed on the other hand to be almost expecting it."

"I don't like it," Nina said, "I don't trust him."

"Nor I," said Mr. Bancroft, "but let us hope," he added, "that he has still enough of the gentleman in

him to keep a promise — I am not sanguine," he continued. He looked depressed and tired. "It was in this very room that it began," he went on after a moment. "*I* saw it — knew what he would try to do — and she, ripe for love — lonely in this great house, credulous with the credulity of women, proved easy prey. Sometimes when I look at her, something tells me that that happiness which she has always dreamed of will never find her and there is something about her delicate, her fragile beauty which frightens me, fills me with dread."

No one spoke for a time and it was very quiet in the room except for the ticking of the old French clock on the mantel-piece.

## CHAPTER XV

CONSTANCE and Storey sat side by side before the massive desk in the room which had been Aladine's. Its top was strewn with a mass of papers which Mrs. Aladine's secretary was placing in a row of boxes standing on a table against the wall, and a clerk from Storey's office was gathering up a number of account books.

"Is Pollock here, and Pierce?" Storey asked, turning to the clerk.

"Yes, sir, they are waiting outside."

"Very well, take them down with you in the car and send it back for me."

The clerk locked the boxes, placed the books in a leather portfolio which he also locked, and opening the door signaled to someone outside. Two strong looking men entered bowing respectfully to Mrs. Aladine and Storey. In a moment, laden with the boxes and the portfolio of books, they, with the clerk had disappeared.

"There is nothing more, Mrs. Aladine?" asked the secretary.

"No, that is all I think," and the secretary too bowed and went out.

Constance jumped to her feet.

"How glad I am it's over. And is everything settled

now, no more papers to sign, no more tiresome business matters to think of? ”

“ Not for the present,” Storey answered, “ but it was my fault ; a good deal has accumulated in two months and even before I went away, I was compelled to neglect your affairs because certain business matters were so pressing,” and he added, “ have I tired you? I haven’t even asked you how you are — are you well? You seem so fragile to me always.”

“ Oh, yes, Vincent, quite well, thank you.” She came and sat beside him again. “ It is so nice to see you — shall we have tea here — just by ourselves? Nina and Goeffrey are becoming reconciled — I have no doubt, downstairs, and would like to be alone.”

“ Has there been a quarrel? ”

“ Yes, but it’s all right now, I hope.” She had touched a bell, and on a servant appearing she said: “ I will have tea here — and please send some to Miss Davidge and tell her that I shall not be down.” She sat with her elbows resting on the desk and her hands shading her eyes. Storey watched her as he always did when he could do so unobserved.

After a moment she turned to him, “ And you have been away on business? ”

“ On business — yes — in the west — for two months.”

Constance put out her hand as if to touch his which rested on the desk, but withdrew it again.

“ Poor Vincent,” she said, “ how hard you work. How strong you must be, Vincent? ”

"Pretty strong," answered Storey in his deep harsh voice. "Always strong enough I hope to look after you when need be."

"Yes, and how good you are to me — how careful of my interests — how could I ever do without you."

"You need never try, Constance."

"Truly, Vincent?" Storey had begun to notice something in her manner which seemed a little unusual — something tremulous and appealing and, too, a tenderness which stirred him. "Truly? will you always help me — always be my friend?"

"We have been friends for a long time, Constance, why change now?"

"Yes!" she answered, "for a long time," — and after a pause she went on, "When *he* was here," and she made a gesture which embraced the room — the room of Aladine, "it was always you who helped me — it was your friendship which made it possible for me to go on — because I felt that if it need be, I would find you by my side. I would not have been strong enough to stay here — if it had not been for you. He frightened me — I could not understand him — and then you would come with your strong voice and the hearty grip of your hand and give me courage."

"Poor Constance," Storey said in turn. "But that is all over long ago — you have been through the valley of the shadow — you must be happy now."

"Be happy," she said thoughtfully, as if to herself.

"Vincent," she said, "why is it that love and happiness so seldom go together?"

"How many people are asking that question," Storey answered with something almost like a sigh.

Constance looked at him.

"Are *you* happy, Vincent?"

"Will happiness come of itself?" he answered. "I think that unless we search for it, we will not find it, and all my life I have been too busy doing other things."

"Things, I suppose," she said, "much more worth while than being happy," and after a moment she added, "for woman, happiness — for man, power."

"And woman's the better choice," added Storey, "because her wisdom is of the ages, while man is always the self-taught child of a day."

A servant had brought the tea, but neither had noticed it.

"Vincent!" Constance said to him, "are my affairs arranged now so that if I should go away for a long time, they would not suffer?"

"You could go," answered Storey, "quite easily, but will you? Why?"

"I don't know, perhaps I shall not go — perhaps I shall — in search of happiness. Do you know," she added after another pause, "I think that *he* was a malicious man." Storey knew that she was thinking again of Aladine. "At the last when he was ill, he seemed to realize that he had failed in some way. One day he asked me to bring him a leather wallet he always used to carry, and opening it he took out a slip of paper and gave it to me. 'What do you make of it?' he asked. 'It was written by some old English poet and

I copied it from a tomb there once — the tomb of a knight, I think.' I have always remembered it," she went on, "and I'll repeat it.

" 'That I spent — that I had  
That I gave — that I have  
That I left — that I lost.'

"Its meaning is quite clear and I explained it to him. In a way he had understood it, but I think the unusual form had puzzled him. He repeated the middle line to himself more than once. 'That I gave — that I have.' 'There's something deep in that,' he said, 'something deep.' He realized that he had sacrificed everything, happiness, health, friendship, self respect, to money and it hadn't paid. He realized, at least it seems so to me, that its responsibilities, its burdens, were too heavy, that it warped people's nature as it had warped his, and it made him hate at last, what he had always worshiped — and that's why he gave it to me — because he didn't want me to be happy. He was a very far seeing man, Vincent."

"And does money keep you from being happy?"

"Yes, in some ways — because it distorts one's vision so that one cannot tell whether one sees clearly or not. I mean in one's relations with others — one cannot tell what is genuine and honest in them, how much they are drawn to you by yourself or by what you have, and so after a while one begins to doubt everyone and to question the sincerity of their motives. It is terrible to feel that — that perhaps no one is to be trusted."

"But that needn't worry you, Constance. If you had nothing, people would never change toward you. Because of all others, you are a woman who compels friendship by reason of things with which money has nothing to do."

"Oh, Vincent," she answered eagerly, "do you think so, are you sure?" and then she added, "of course with you it is so different—you have always shown your friendship and interest by such kindness—such thoughtfulness—which always touches a woman so. Think of all that you have done for me—what a true friend you have been—of all the labor and trouble you take with my affairs—looking after them so painstakingly—and I hardly ever thank you—always safeguarding them, thinking of better things to do—of new plans—of ways to save me trouble and all for nothing—a labor of—"

She stopped, looked at him, seemed to see something in his expression which startled her and did not go on.

Storey sat for some time without moving. At last he said:

"Yes—a labor of love—not friendship, not kindness, not thoughtfulness—but love. Did you ever know," he continued, "have you never guessed—what you have been to me all these years? From the moment I saw you here—after you had married, Aladine, until now?"

Constance looked straight ahead for a moment with wide open eyes as if some vision, some prospect she had not imagined, had suddenly spread itself before her and

then a crimson flush arose quickly up and she hid her face in her hands.

"I don't know that I should ever have told you this, if something in you had not compelled me to to-day. But what I am, what I have, is yours if you want it — has been yours since I knew you and always will be whether you take it or not. There is some truth in what you say about the curse of money, but you would be safe with me — I don't know that you could love me — me, Storey the monster."

"Oh, don't, don't," she said.

"But if you want love, want devotion, I can give them to you because I always have. You are the only woman who has ever existed for me or who ever will, and you know me — what I'm like — that I don't change — only I know — what my drawbacks are — that's why I thought that I would never tell you, because I — well, I felt that I was too ugly — that it would be preposterous to expect you to —"

Constance caught his hand in both of hers. "Oh, Vincent," she said, "don't talk like that, things like that don't matter to women — and Vincent, I want to tell you that you are too good for me, a thousand times, and I admire you and respect you and esteem you more than any man I have ever known — but I can't, that's all. Do you know?" and she smiled through the tears that welled in her eyes — "you are so strong and noble and kind, that I almost wish that I could, but it wouldn't be love, Vincent, and I shall never marry without it."

"And no chance?" asked Storey.

"No, Vincent — no chance," she answered softly.

Storey got up and stood looking down at her. There was no change of expression in his face, but in his proud, spirited and piercing eyes, Constance saw love, pain and lasting devotion. He held out his hand.

"It's all right," he said, "only let me tell you that I shall be always as I am now — but I shall not speak of it again and we will be friends as we were before."

Constance rose from her chair and they stood for a moment with clasped hands. She seemed, while wishing to say something, to be in doubt, to hesitate — at last she said, "Vincent, you speak about friendship — you say that we shall always be friends — will you remember that — I want it so much — your friendship — and will you always give it to me?"

"Of course, why not?" he answered.

"Even if you might not think me worthy? Remember that you have promised — and if something should happen which might make you think bitterly toward me, try to forgive me, Vincent, and remember that I shall always want it, shall always, no matter where I am, want to feel, that — that —" suddenly she came close up to him and putting her handkerchief to her eyes, rested her head on his shoulder and wept for a moment gently there. Then lifting her head and looking at him appealingly through her tears she said:

"Always believe in me, Vincent, and always be my friend — once more — will you promise me your faith and friendship?"

"Yes," repeated Storey, "my faith and friendship."

"For always?"

"For always."

Storey went down the great staircase with his light almost graceful step, and his expression would have revealed nothing unless one could, like Constance, have read the meaning in his eyes. Keenly sensitive about his physical ugliness, the more so because he was a passionate lover of the beautiful, he had led a life which was almost monastic in its sobriety, in spite of the popular legends to the contrary. In his big house on the east side, he had lived for years surrounded by his Chinese porcelains — his old furniture — his velvets and his silver, with Constance enshrined in his heart and this had been his bitterness — that he feared to tell her, feared that she might reveal in a moment like that a physical distaste, shrinking from his deformity that would hurt him incurably. And in her attitude toward him, there had been nothing like this, no hint. She had in fact said it did not matter to women — and it gave him almost a feeling of hope. The great obstacle or what to him had always seemed so — had turned out to be of small importance and perhaps in time he might overcome the other. He felt almost light-hearted; the purplish patch on his face, his huge ungainly figure, didn't matter now — he would be with her often. Even if she went away, as she spoke of doing, he could wait, now that she knew.

As he reached the lower landing, he heard voices coming from the little parlor at the right, the door of which stood ajar, and as he passed it he heard someone say,

"Why, there is Mr. Storey," and Mr. Bancroft appeared. Looking past him, Storey saw Nina and Goefrey seated on a sofa. He liked young people, because they were young. He did not feel that he knew any of them very well, for the reason that the great interests, the heavy responsibilities of his life absorbed him so much, but when he had a moment and the opportunity offered, he liked to talk with them because they were good to look at with their clear skin and eyes, their glossy hair and their young voices. He turned to the footman at the door:

"Let me know when my car comes," he said and went in. Mr. Bancroft followed and returned to his chair.

"Goefrey, my boy," Storey said, putting his hand on the latter's shoulder as he sat down, "how is everything going, now that you have really begun to work in earnest?"

"Looking up a little now, sir, I think," answered Goefrey.

"Come and see me once in a while, will you?" Storey said, "I may be able to put something in your way — but come, don't hesitate — or I may forget about you. I have a good many things to think of, you know. No, thanks," he added to Nina, who had offered him some tea.

"Is Constance coming down?" asked Mr. Bancroft.

"I don't know," answered Storey, "I hardly think so, we had a number of business matters to talk over and it tired her I think."

"She gets tired easily," said Mr. Bancroft.

Storey turned to him—"Don't you think she is well?" he asked.

"I think she is delicate," the old man said, "too delicate."

"I wonder," said Storey—"I wonder if she is concerned about herself at all—she spoke about going away, to be gone for a good while—I wonder if she is concerned about her health?"

"She spoke about going away?" asked Mr. Bancroft, "did she say where?"

"Nothing definite, she said she might be gone for a long time."

The others exchanged glances.

"I wonder when."

"Soon, I should say."

"There is something strange about that; until very lately she expected to be at Lowlands for the summer," the old man said, mentioning a country place of Constance's in New England. "Look here, sir," he said, making a sudden resolution and turning to Storey—and then anger getting the better of him for a moment, he brought his fist down on the arm of his chair—"the damned rascal," he cried, "what is he putting her up to?"

Storey looked at him with an expression of surprised inquiry.

"Richard Whitely," the old man went on, trembling with excitement—"that precious cousin of Goeffrey's here. You have been away, sir—and let me tell you

that in two month he has woven his coils about Constance until she can't escape him."

Storey did not understand. He had seen Richard once perhaps, and had promptly forgotten his existence — he looked at the others for help.

"You may not remember him, Mr. Storey," Nina answered, "he is Goeffrey's cousin — he has been abroad for years — but he was here that day when Mr. Pandolfi came in and told us about my father — and — and he has been coming here ever since and we are afraid that Constance is getting to be too fond of him. We know that she is."

A dark flush rose up under Storey's swarthy skin, but he said quietly:

"And why should she not be fond of him?"

"Because," interrupted Mr. Bancroft, "he's a rascal, a damned intriguing, mercenary rascal; because he hasn't a penny and wants her money; because he's a gambler and a reprobate and —"

"Wait — wait," interrupted Storey, holding up his hand. "Goeffrey," he added, "you know him perhaps better than Mr. Bancroft, what do you think of him?"

"All I can say," answered Goeffrey, "is that I don't think Richard is the right sort for Constance — I think Mr. Bancroft really knows more about him than I do. It's hard to express my meaning, but if no one knew anything against him, I would feel that she is — well, different somehow."

"I can't seem to remember him," said Storey, "you say that he was here that day?"

"Yes, he came in, late with Mrs. Martel."

Then Storey knew, and at the same moment Constance's manner was explained. It was plain that she contemplated some action which she knew would wound him and perhaps seriously jeopardize their long friendship. It did not seem like her — why could she not have been frank — that would have hurt him less than this — not to be candid after all their years of intimacy, of mutual regard and kindness, this was not like his idea of her. Had he been mistaken? And then he looked up and she stood in the doorway, tall, beautiful and disdainful. She came in very quietly and everyone got up with a simultaneous and mechanical movement.

"I couldn't help hearing you," she said. She seemed to speak to them all, but her eyes were fixed on Storey. "If you discuss my affairs in my own house with the door open, you must not blame me if you are overheard, but I shall not discuss them with you, because they concern no one except myself," and she turned to go out again.

Mr. Bancroft raised both his hands to her imploringly. "Constance, listen," he said, "for one moment, listen to me."

She turned on him savagely — "I *have* listened," she answered. "I heard what you were saying and I know all the scandalous stories you would like to repeat to me — and I have no patience with people who repeat them, who have so little to do that they busy themselves in gathering them together. Oh, Julien, that you —"

"Constance," Mr. Bancroft repeated imploringly. "Let me speak to you — give me five minutes."

"No, Julien, I shall not," she answered, turning her back on him, "and Vincent," she added, "don't go yet, I have something to say to you."

Mr. Bancroft, who seemed crushed, went out of the room with Nina and Goeffrey. Constance shut the door after them and came back quickly to where Storey was standing.

"Already," she said, "I ask you to forgive me."

"Yes," he answered bitterly, "already."

"And you will not?" she asked.

Storey had been hurt too deeply to answer.

"Already," she went on, "I have put your promise of faith and friendship to the test, was it worth so little?"

"How did you get it?"

"Was I dishonest with you?"

"Were you frank?" he answered, "did I not deserve better treatment at your hands?"

"Think — of what you had just said to me."

"I would not begrudge you happiness — but Constance — if this is what you had in mind when you said that you were going away in search of it — you are making a mistake — a fatal one."

"What do you mean?"

"I know certain things."

"And you have stories too, to tell?"

"Yes, I have a story, but it is not mine to tell without permission. Listen, Constance, do you believe, even

after what I said to you to-day, that I could put my own hopes and wishes aside and think only of your happiness — disregarding my own? ”

“ Yes, I believe it, Vincent,” she answered, “ if any one could.” But there was a note of coldness in her voice.

“ Wait,” said Storey.

He went into the little telephone room in the hall and called up Martel’s house.

“ Is Mr. Martel there? ”

“ No, sir, he is away,” a servant’s voice answered.

“ Can he be reached by telephone? ”

“ No, sir, he is on Mr. Vernay’s yacht.”

“ When do you expect him? ”

“ He will be here on Saturday, sir.”

“ Are you sure? ”

“ Quite sure, sir, he said he would positively be back on Saturday.”

Storey hung up the receiver and went back to her. “ I am sorry,” he said, “ I wanted to get permission to tell you something, but the person is away and I cannot possibly know until Saturday, may I see you then? Remember that whatever I tell you, you may rely upon as being true.”

“ Very well, Vincent, come Saturday,” she said coldly.

“ And Constance,” he began, but she interrupted him.

“ Oh, please, please let me alone,” she cried; “ forgive me,” she added, “ I don’t mean to be rude, but I’m tired — yes — come Saturday, in the afternoon.”

"Very well," he repeated. "Saturday in the afternoon."

He turned and looked at her as he went out — and there was something in her attitude, something friendless and lonely, that wrung his heart. He felt that if he went back to her and took her in his arms, he might win her — he hesitated, but he was afraid.

Mr. Bancroft and Goeffrey were standing before the house talking together and his car was just coming up. Storey offered to take them down and they got in with him. It was one of those balmy days in Spring when one becomes suddenly aware that the earth, in some magic way, has clothed itself over night in green. The sun was setting and long shadows fell across the lawns of the park. The air was motionless and the small leaves of the trees seemed floating in some golden medium. On the east drive they could see lines of carriages and motors passing endlessly — and in the golden light all was mellowed. The cries of children, the whir of motors, the jingling of harness chains, the clash of hoofs, the light beating on the spokes of varnished wheels, the emerald of the trees and lawns, the great houses facing the park, the broad avenue, all the color, light, sound, was blended by the mellow radiance of the descending sun, into a picture which was opulent and impressive — imperial and splendid.

Mr. Bancroft seemed stupefied, crushed. His idol had turned on him when he was doing his best to save her from destruction. Storey pitied him sincerely.

"Cheer up, Julien," he said, "we may do something

yet. I am to see her again on Saturday," but as he spoke they passed Richard. He did not see them, but all three looked at him steadfastly. Storey with special keenness. He was dressed for the afternoon — wore a silk hat and carried a stick — as many men were doing, but in everything about him, his face like that of the incomparable Hermes, with its youthful and half smiling mouth, his walk, his shoulders, the poise of his head, the swing of his arms, his boots, his clothes, his gloves, there was an extraordinary distinction, a mingling of sophistication and romance which had in them the sovereignty of beauty and made him formidable — and Storey thinking of his own disfigured face, his huge and ungainly shape, pitted against that faun, that young god — laughed suddenly so harshly that the others looked at him in wonder.

"For man, power," Constance had said — power! — what was it? He had power, such as few men had, yet against this youth he felt that he was powerless — as if he were pitted against one who carried weapons more invincible than any he, with all his resources, could avail himself of.

The next day, Friday, Goeffrey went early to look at the property Mr. Eckstein had offered him. He spent an hour there, looked at it from every point; paced it off to see if the Jew had been correct in the dimensions he had given him, climbed the fence even and descended into the excavation and then his imagination already at work, hurried back and began at once to make plans for a building such as Eckstein had suggested. The work

fascinated him, he was enthralled by it. He went to luncheon and hurried back to work at it again — dined at his club and could hardly wait to finish his coffee. He superimposed sheet after sheet of tracing paper, one on the other, each plan suggesting arrangements which seemed an improvement on the last. He whistled and was happy. Suddenly the telephone bell tinkled in his office. He looked at his watch, it was eleven o'clock.

“It is, Nina,” he heard a faint voice answer.

“Nina,” he repeated in surprise, “are you in town?”

“Yes,” she answered, “I am here at Constance’s. After you had gone she asked me to stay, I am here now, and Goeffrey, they are married — Constance and Richard.”

“Married! good God!” he exclaimed, “when?”

“Here — a little while ago — they have just left for the steamer — they sail early to-morrow morning.”

## CHAPTER XVI

STOREY dined alone that night. In his thoughts, doubt, fear and a strange unlooked for hope were mingled. Constance had said that those physical defects which he had thought were insurmountable and the possession of which had darkened his life, didn't count. It must be then that women looked deeper, saw other things in a man and in that case he might possess those things too, and Whitely's mere beauty would not give him the advantage Storey had feared. But she loved Whitely — what then? This did not disturb him greatly and the fact that it did not, either revealed his ignorance of certain feminine traits or indicated a belief that Constance was so far above the average woman, that infinitely greater and juster things might be expected of her. Lovers I am told often take this point of view, even the least imaginative ones. Mr. Bancroft had seen the futility of going to Constance with any revelations of Richard's life, but Storey felt quite sure that once she knew what he had to tell her, provided Martel gave him permission, she would break with him forever. But at the same time, he doubted and feared. Doubted his ability even if Whitely should no longer be a menace, to win her for himself, and feared as he thought of the future — that something might be hidden in its ob-

scurity which would make what he longed for impossible.

He rose from the table, passed through a large drawing-room, crossed the hall, and went up the broad staircase to his library, an immense apartment on the second floor. The house was filled with the results of his labors as a collector, a labor to which he brought a real love of art and wealth inexhaustible, but to-night, stimulated by his new born hope, his tapestries, his porcelains, his gems, his silver, all his priceless treasures, seemed worthless to him compared to that one treasure which he longed to possess.

As he entered the library, the telephone sounded and going to it a servant asked him if he would speak to Mr. Martel. He turned the switch, isolating the instrument which he was using, and called into it.

“Charles?”

“Yes.”

“They told me you were away and would not be back until Saturday.”

“I will explain that—but I must see you at once, Vincent.”

Storey noticed a suppressed excitement in Martel’s tone.

“Very well,” he said, “I shall be here, and I am alone.”

“No,” answered Martel, “I must see you at my house, please come at once, will you? It is most important; that’s all it is possible for me to say now. Will you come?”

"Yes, I will come," Storey replied.

He had but two blocks to go and in five minutes rang Martel's door bell.

"You are expected, sir," the servant said, "Mr. Martel is in his study."

He found Martel walking quickly up and down. On seeing Storey, he said, "You will remember our talk in this room a few months ago — well, the time has come when I must ask you to help me." He went out into the hall and speaking to the servant, so that Storey would not hear, said: "Ask Mrs. Martel to come down, please," and returning, he shut the door and resumed his rapid pacing to and fro.

Martel had struggled desperately with himself before he had opened the letter which Hortense had so treacherously left on his table; struggled against what he knew to be an inexcusable and dishonorable act; but the rage which increased in him at the thought that his wife persisted in disobeying him by continuing to communicate with Richard, overcame his scruples and he had read it. Its contents indicated so plainly her relations with Whitely and showed so clearly how he could obtain evidence which would put her completely at his mercy, that he was startled; because he realized that at last he must act, that some decisive step must be taken — the letter had made the situation so plain to him, that it was impossible to ignore it.

He must consider what to do.

First — Instead of posting the letter as he had meant to do, he could take it to her — confess that he had read

it and explain that as it had shown him that it was impossible for them to continue longer, even the semblance of marriage, he was prepared to give her her freedom. But there were serious objections to this plan — the children — would he give them up. No — would she? No, besides he was simply throwing his wife into the arms of a man he hated — and his rage at this thought made him cast the whole idea aside as one which he could not possibly accept.

Second — He could tell her that he had read the letter and insist on a separation, stipulating that while it would be impossible to live under the same roof with her, he would take no action against her and there would be no scandal. He would give the children into her care, reserving the right of course to see them when he chose. He would do this on condition that she should not see Whitely again. But why exact such a promise? One which she had already made, and had broken. This plan was absurd because it would leave them precisely where they were before.

Third — He could take advantage of the information contained in the letter, secure the necessary evidence, drag her into court, disgrace and divorce her and give her into her lover's arms, indelibly branded and besmirched.

Martel finally decided on the second plan with this modification — he would conceal the fact that he had read the letter, secure his evidence against her and then explain his scheme, giving her plainly to understand that she was in his power and that should she break her promise to him a second time, she would be deliberately

condemning herself to the ordeal and the humiliation of a public divorce. Martel smiled to himself at the ingenuity of his plan. She would be free apparently, not even under the restraint of his presence, but always about her throat, like an invisible rope, would hang the noose of his evidence against her, ready to tighten and strangle her should she step down for one moment from the narrow path of conduct he would mark out for her.

This plan decided on, he proceeded to act upon it, when a new difficulty presented itself. A sense of disgust, of repulsion filled him when he finally realized all the base and sordid expedients he must have recourse to; the spying, the deception. He felt an almost overpowering sense of degradation when he first began negotiations with the dirty band he must employ to do his dirty business, and realized that he was placing in their hands, the secret of his wife's dishonor. Only his bitter resentment toward her enabled him to go on with it, but after he had taken the first step, the wounds he received with each report from his agents, seemed to goad him into a madness which spurred him to still greater efforts against her; into a frenzy which he knew would not leave him until he had overwhelmed her with the revelation of his intimate knowledge of her guilt. He waited with almost uncontrollable impatience the consummation of his plans, rehearsed over and over in his thoughts the scene in which he would confound her, and in the anticipation of his vengeance, experienced a savage, an almost intolerable joy.

Martel stopped at last before Storey and said:

"Listen, Vincent, after our talk I determined to separate from my wife, but I wished to be in a position where, as she had injured me so cruelly, I could dictate what terms I chose. They told you to-day that I was on Vernay's yacht, but I have been in the city constantly — watching, do you understand — watching. I did this because I had reason to think that they were becoming suspicious, but I believe now that I was mistaken. They suspect nothing and I am glad — I didn't want them to know — I wanted to stun them, to terrify them."

"Am I to infer that you have been watching your wife?" asked Storey.

"Yes," Martel replied shortly, and as Storey made no comment he added, "wouldn't you have done so under the circumstances?"

"I would not," answered Storey.

"Why, may I ask?" Martel spoke almost with a sneer.

"Let me ask you a question, why did you?"

"To punish her for what she has done to me — to make her suffer, as she has made me. To have always in my hand, a whip to lash her if I choose, for dishonoring me."

"You are naturally a kindly man," said Storey, "but you have brooded too much about this matter. Those are very barbarous sentiments of yours."

"How, barbarous,— they are natural ones, aren't they?"

"For a savage, yes, but they're not worthy of you. She has hurt your pride, so you will humiliate her, you

will make her suffer because she has wounded you — ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’ — Did she do what she has done for the purpose of injuring you?”

“She could have avoided doing it.”

“Love is a strong thing, my dear fellow.”

“Then why not have come to me at first and told me.”

“Oh! come, come,” interrupted Storey, “be honest with yourself.”

“But to deceive me,” Martel went on without heeding him — “to lie to me — no — no — revenge is sweet —”

“Vengeance is *mine*, I will repay,” said Storey solemnly.

The door opened, and Mrs. Martel came into the room.

Knowing her secret, there was something pitiful to Storey in the false and smiling look she cast at them — and in her expression something both doubting and defiant too, as if she might say to them:

“If you knew all, you would scorn me, but why should it be a sin for one to be happy? I do not wish you any harm, but that which possesses me is stronger than myself. Must you punish me for it? You do not say that I shall not eat if I am hungry, drink if I am thirsty or sleep if I am tired — and nature made love stronger than all of these feelings. Why then do you forbid people to love when you know that to love or not to love is something over which they have no control? There is a cruelty, an injustice about this which I cannot understand.”

She wore one of those dresses of clinging chiffon which

revealed her perfect figure and displayed the ivory whiteness of her arms and shoulders. She made a gesture of pleased surprise at seeing Storey and turning to her husband she said:

“Did you wish to see me, Charles?”

Martel went quickly to the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket. “Yes,” he said, while a blaze of ferocity appeared in his intensely blue eyes. “I wished to see you — because for three months I have known every step you have taken, the particulars of every assignation you have given your lover and to-night I propose to settle my account with you.”

Mrs. Martel turned ghastly pale and sat down very slowly on a small chair which stood in front of Martel’s desk. It seemed as if she tried to speak, but before she could do so, Storey got up, saying:

“This is something which concerns yourself and your wife — you shouldn’t have asked me to come here.”

“I will explain why I asked you,” Martel answered and turning to his wife he went on, “Yes — to-night I shall settle my account with you. For a long time you have overridden my wishes, ignored your own sacred duties toward me and have shown yourself callously indifferent to my honor, your own and your children’s. I know why you have done this, because you thought yourself safe, you felt sure that I was too weak, too inert to assert myself, that you could impose on me with impunity. I shall show you now how much you were mistaken; that the fool you have no doubt sneered at so often, is not quite the fool you thought.”

Mrs. Martel sat motionless except for a slight spasmodic contraction of the muscles of the throat from time to time, as if she were trying to swallow. She was still ghastly pale and her dark eyes under her fair hair stared straight in front with a fixed expression as if she saw approaching her, in some dreadful shape, the irrevocable consequences of her folly — approaching swiftly and implacably to destroy her.

“But in spite of what I have suffered at your hands,” Martel went on, “I have determined to be lenient with you as I shall explain presently, and I shall refrain from disgracing you publicly so long as you follow my instructions to the letter. I shall ask you to make no promises, because I know that you are incapable of keeping them, but be sure that I shall arrange matters so that I shall be kept well advised of every step you take. Whether you disobey me or not, is a matter of profound indifference to me. I am simply giving you one more chance to save yourself from disgrace. You are to go to Fernleigh,” naming his place in New England, “taking the children with you — you are to send them to town at any time, when I should wish to see them, but you are to stay there — permanently — summer and winter. The grounds are large and afford ample opportunity for exercise so that it will never be necessary for you to leave them, in fact you are not to do so under any pretext and you shall never send any letter or any communication of any sort to anyone, whatever, except to myself or through me. Those are my terms — really they are not bad,” he said with a sneer. “The servants

whom I shall provide, will be numerous enough for all your requirements, and I shall give you an ample allowance. You will be enabled to lead a simple and healthy life which will be of benefit to you and you may even develop habits of contemplation sufficiently profound so that after a time it may dawn on you that it was not I after all who has been the fool. My alternative is — a public divorce.”

“Mrs. Martel,” Storey broke in, “please understand that I am a most unwilling witness here, that Charles’s act in asking me to come was inexcusable, and it is unbecoming for me to take any part in this matter at all, but I feel that I must give you my advice — don’t accept his offer, it is brutal and inhuman, he virtually proposes to put you in prison — refuse — I doubt if he would be willing to face a public scandal,” — and turning to Martel he added, “No good can come of such an arrangement — get divorced as quietly as possible — such things can always be arranged, send Mrs. Martel west or go yourself.”

Then Mrs. Martel spoke and her voice, her expression were those of one beaten down into a profound dejection, into a hopeless and immitigable despair.

“But if there is a divorce, he will insist on having the children and oh! Mr. Storey, I can’t give them up — they’re all I have. He knows that I will do anything to keep them with me.”

She covered her face with her hands and her shoulders were shaken with sobs.

"All you have," repeated Martel malignantly, "is not your lover worth taking in exchange for them?"

"For shame," said Storey contemptuously. "You are forfeiting all right to sympathy."

"I don't want your sympathy," Martel retorted furiously, "and let me tell you something, I will *advise* her to take the alternate of a divorce — public though it will be, for I shall never consent to anything else — I advise her to do it, do you know why? Because sooner or later it is inevitable — I know to the bottom her false and insincere nature — that she can't be honest — and that even now she is hoping that it will be possible to hoodwink me under the conditions which I insist upon. And she will try, I know her — because she has an incorrigible faith in her powers of deception, even after what has passed. Any promise she may make me, will be an insincere one — I know that. I know quite well what she will do, she will accept my terms, go to Fernleigh and try to evade them," — and turning to his wife, "Well, what do you intend to do?"

"I will do what you force me to do."

"I force you to do nothing. Do you mean that you will go to Fernleigh?"

"Yes."

"Very well," he placed some writing paper before her on the desk, drew a note book from his pocket and standing beside her he said, "write."

"Write?" she asked, at a loss to understand what was wanted of her.

"Yes, write, what I shall dictate to you."

"I don't understand, is it an agreement?"

"No, it is a confession."

"A confession?"

"Yes — your confession written in your own hand of all the knowledge I hold against you."

"Charles!" she exclaimed, her eyes blazing, "how dare you, I shall not."

"Write," he repeated.

"No."

"Write."

"Have you gone stark mad," cried Storey, overcome by anger and indignation. "Such a paper would be of no use in law — besides if you have evidence, why should you want it? You have no right to torture her like this."

Suddenly Mrs. Martel jumped to her feet and crying, "Oh! let me go, let me go," ran to the door, seized the knob and began turning it desperately.

Martel went quickly up to her and putting his face close to hers he hissed:

"I will let you go — but if you do your children will leave this house to-night. You will never see them again."

"Charles," cried Storey, "I swear, that if you don't end this insane situation, at once, I will use physical force."

Martel burst into a harsh, a terrible laugh.

"This is what I wanted you for — don't you see? to give her a taste of what publicity is like. She doesn't relish revealing her delinquencies before you.

How would she like the public to know them; to have every detail given to the world? Shall I open the door?" he added.

"If you don't, I will break it open," said Storey.

"No! no! Mr. Storey, let me write it, I beg of you — let me," Mrs. Martel entreated. Her eyes were streaming with tears and she trembled violently. "He wants to drive me to kill myself, but I *will* have my children — I will *not* give them up." She sat down at the desk shaking in every limb and took up her pen. "I will write it," she said, and Martel began.

Began all that sad and dubious chronicle of an illicit companionship — slowly, relentlessly, without evading one fact to ease the shame of her situation, he dictated word for word the record of his spies' reports. His humiliation of her was so brutal, his insistence on the smallest details, so sinister, and his agents had been most thorough in the task he had given them, that Storey attempted more than once to end it, but he had found himself helpless — strong and dominant though he was — found himself in the presence of passions which he was powerless to control, the more so because she too insisted on going through with it to the end. Beginning with a shaking hand and eyes wet with tears, she grew stronger as the ordeal went on — her tears ceased to flow, her hand grew firm, the situation developed into a sort of duel in which he, by heaping on her the accumulated evidence against her, seemed to be trying to break down her self-control, while she fought to preserve it, determined to submit to any

cruelty, any insult, rather than be driven to a step which would separate her from her children. But at each moment, in the burning flush which had mounted to her face, in the curve of her lips, in the blaze of her eyes, Storey could see the growth of a fierce, a terrible hatred against her husband. Before, she had pitied him, because she felt that she was injuring him without being able not to do so, but this awful outrage against all that a woman instinctively fights to conceal, had roused in her a resentment so passionate, that no circumstance could assuage it. He had subjected her to indignities too intolerable ever to be forgiven.

When she had finished he said, "Sign it." And as she wrote her name at the bottom, he added:

"We leave on the ten o'clock train to-morrow morning for Fernleigh. Have the children ready. I shall return here to-morrow night."

Mrs. Martel got up without speaking and standing quite still looked into her husband's eyes with a gaze so insupportable, so full of reproach, of pain, of anger, despair and hatred, that he turned away from her and going to the door unlocked it in silence. She went out and as it closed after her, he sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"And is revenge so sweet, now that you have tasted it?" asked Storey scornfully. But as Martel made no reply, he too left the room and let himself out into the street.

He walked slowly back to his house. A hint of spring was in the air and a fitful and balmy breeze

blew at intervals through the silent streets. From the avenues not far away, an occasional distant roar would arise, lessening again into silence. Even from where he walked, he could see the towering summits of the buildings. The city seemed not asleep but brooding — brooding upon all the acts, the tragedies, the dramas, the joys that grow and pass within her stony bosom as if she were trying in the stillness of the night, to solve the intricate mystery of life — and Storey too thought of it, thought of Martel, of his wife, of Whitely, of Constance, — why so much pain — so much hatred, such despair, such suffering — what was the meaning of it all — where the key with which to make it clear? He thought of himself, of his own life and that also was incomprehensible to him; because he felt that with all his possessions, his colossal wealth, which amazed even him at times, all his power, he too, even as the least of men, was moved like a marionette by some hidden and unknowable force. What would he not give for Constance, to win her to him, but how helpless he was?

As his mind dwelt on her, however, his sense of depression began to pass. The thought of her seemed to bid him to look up. She seemed to float above him in the ineffable blue of the sky, like a star, like a jewel, sincere and steadfast, and a feeling of serenity, of comfort, of hope, flooded his soul.

Storey too, was to leave town the next morning. It was very late when he reached home and he was to take an early train, but as he ordered his life with great method, as was indeed necessary for one with such multi-

farious and important duties, he had left instructions to be called. His destination was a great tract of wild country which he had purchased some years before in the northern part of the state, and which he was gradually transferring into a park with roads, bridges, preserves and in time a large house. He derived pleasure from even a few hours passed in inspecting the work which was being carried on on a vast scale and which appealed to his powerfully developed constructive and administrative ability.

On getting up on Friday morning to make ready for his journey, he noticed that the depression of the night before, caused by the distressing scene between Martel and his wife, had returned and he could not shake it off. During the whole of his visit north, it weighed on him. That night he slept badly, and during his journey back to town on Saturday, he could not rid himself of the feeling that somehow what he had witnessed was not the end, that something distressing, he could not tell what, would result from it. He found himself thinking about that migration to Fernleigh which was to take place under such strange conditions, and wishing heartily that he knew the outcome of it. He would telephone Martel's house when he got home to ascertain if he had returned.

His train was due at four and he was to see Constance at five. He had realized that he could not ask Martel's permission to disclose to her the secret of Whitely's relations with his wife, and wondered how he could have ever thought it possible. Even with Martel's

consent, he felt that he could not do so. It was not Martel's secret alone, but another's as well. All that he could do, would be to tell her the circumstances, revealing no names and ask her to believe that he was absolutely sure of the truth of his assertions.

Still under the influence of his vague apprehensions, he left the train on its arrival, determined to walk to his house which was only a short distance from the station. As he passed through the great waiting room full of noise and confusion, he glanced at a news stand and saw that the papers, of which he had seen none since the morning before, displayed enormous headlines, as is their wont, in announcing some startling or important event, and at that moment a news man came in carrying a bundle of a late edition in which the entire front page was given up to the topic which was evidently of an unusual nature. His curiosity aroused, he approached the stand — the type of the headlines was so large that before he reached it, he could read them and the moment he did so, he knew that the reason for his apprehension was made clear.

#### FRIGHTFUL DISASTER —

#### SOUND STEAMERS IN COLLISION

#### SCORES OF LIVES LOST.

He knew before taking the paper in his hand, that Martel was concerned in it and a rapid examination of

the account confirmed his worst fears. His name was among those given as lost. He had said that he would be in town on Saturday and after having taken Mrs. Martel and the children to Fernleigh, must have determined to return by boat, rather than to wait for the morning train.

Storey stood stock still for a moment, looking straight ahead without seeing, unmindful of the fact that his well known figure was causing many curious glances to be cast toward him, and then passed quickly out of the main vestibule with a look of deep abstraction on his face.

He paused and glanced at the gray sky. As he came down the steps of the station to the sidewalk, he was immediately engulfed, submerged in the noise and turmoil of the streets. In the inextricable confusion, it seemed to him as if he were caught in the grip of powerful opposing forces, engaged in a blind struggle, brutal and unnecessary. And this tumult, this disorderly mêlée, undisciplined prodigal of its power, seemed to Storey to typify life; the same waste of vital forces; the same spending of energy — as if except for the puny efforts of man to regulate himself, due to an instinct too faint, too obscure to be understood, there were no laws which he must obey except those which nature herself had implanted in him, which were inimical to him, but which he always blindly followed and which led him always to disaster.

Martel, forced by circumstances into a life of unhappiness, had been forced by them into a condition almost of madness, ending in an explosion of unbridled

hatred — anger and cruelty — and in the midst of his suffering, the end came. How sinister it seemed, how useless.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” he repeated solemnly to himself.

It was half past four when he reached his house. Ascending to the library he was about to ring for a servant and instruct him to order his car, when he saw on the table a package of papers — and lying on top of them, a note addressed in Martel’s handwriting. He opened it and read:

“As I am leaving town to-morrow morning, I have decided to send you the papers which accompany this note. They contain the confession, written in our presence to-night; my will, and certain requests I would ask you to comply with in case anything should happen to me. You asked me just as you were leaving, ‘Whether revenge was sweet now that I had tasted it,’ — I do not know. It would seem that I was justified in doing what I did, and yet, it may be that I was wrong. I cannot tell, Vincent. At least, forgive me, for making you a participant in that painful interview.”

Storey picked up the package of papers intending to lock them in his desk, but as he did so, he saw a note which had been lying beneath them. It was in Constance’s hand and had been posted late the night before. He opened it.

“Forgive me,” it said, “when I told you to come on Saturday. I lied to you, because I knew that I would not be here.”

## CHAPTER XVII

SUMMER had come and town was deserted. Nina, Aunt Mary and the children had gone to Lowlands, Mrs. Aladine's place in New England, having gratefully accepted her offer of it to Nina the night of her marriage. Goeffrey went to Mrs. Aladine's the morning after Nina had telephoned. Everything had been arranged for some days apparently. After Storey, Mr. Bancroft and Goeffry had left the house on Thursday, Nina in response to an urgent request on Mrs. Aladine's part, had decided to stay in town with her until Saturday at least. On Friday afternoon a number of trunks had been taken away and toward evening she saw Mrs. Aladine's maid equipped as if for a journey, drive off in a cab. She and Mrs. Aladine had dined alone together, and it was not until ten o'clock when Richard was announced that Constance had told her. Mr. and Mrs. Vanderveer and a clergyman arrived a moment after and as soon as the ceremony had been performed, Constance and Richard had left at once for the steamer which was to sail at half past six the next morning.

And Goeffrey was happy again. He had made his peace with Nina and he was to build his building. He had decided to embark on this venture almost at once, relying solely in his own judgment. He had, it is true, consulted his lawyer about it, who had urged him not to,

but as this wasn't the sort of advice he wanted, he had not seen him again and on Eckstein's visit the following week, had told him that he had reached a favorable decision in the matter, engaged an assistant and started at once on the plans. They worked day and night on them, but every Friday Goeffrey would take the train for Lowlands, five hours away, returning on Monday morning.

Goeffrey's first disappointment came, when on completing his drawings, and inviting bids on them he found that his building would cost a hundred thousand more than Eckstein's loan. He began at once on other plans, economizing wherever it was possible to do so, and reduced the estimate of the lowest contractors by twenty-five thousand. Further study of the situation convinced him that he could do no better. He consulted Eckstein.

"Get more rent for your flats," said the latter, "by the time it is built you can do it."

"But if I borrow enough on a permanent loan to pay you off, I shall still be seventy-five thousand in debt," answered Goeffrey.

"Well, your larger income will increase the value of it and if it should be necessary to raise a small additional amount, you can always do that by placing a second mortgage. If you create a sinking fund you will soon be able to pay that off and then you will be all right again."

Goeffrey went back, let his contracts and the building was started; but as the work got underway, he found

himself facing another difficulty. The matter of payments. While the most expensive portion of the work was that which was performed during the earlier stages of construction, he found in his contract with Eckstein that the preliminary payments of the building loan were unduly small and that they increased as the building neared completion. In this way it was plain that for the main portion of the work he would not have the use of Eckstein's money when it was most needed, but must manage on the small first installments and what money he could himself furnish. He went to see Eckstein again. The latter informed him that this was the customary method, was indeed necessary for the protection of the lender. As an illustration, he had known of a transaction where the preliminary payments had been large, in which the builder had disappeared after getting the first two without having paid anybody anything. Goeffrey's contract with Eckstein stipulated that the payments of the loan should be made when the building had reached certain stages of completion, but as he had found that he could build it more cheaply by placing the different contracts in as many hands as possible, instead of under the control of one firm who in turn would sublet much of it, demands were soon made on him by the smaller contractors who, with little capital, could not wait for that point to be reached where Goeffrey could get money himself. In consequence he found it was necessary to pay out between eight and ten thousand dollars before he could make his first application to Eckstein.

But so far there had been no delays in the progress of the work. Goeffrey watched it with avidity and seemed to see in it, as it rose slowly into the air, a symbol of his own fortunes and with a natural optimism he disregarded the complications and difficulties which must surely arise before its completion. But there was one thing which caused him anxiety and that was Nina's attitude toward him. After the soft and charming days following their reconciliation, he had begun to feel that his position with her was not quite secure. She was kind, gay, sympathetic and even affectionate at times, but he could not rid himself of the feeling that he was on trial; that she always had herself well in hand and that his ultimate success with her, depended on the result of the business he was engaged in. It may be that it was only afterwards, when looking at it in the light of subsequent events, that Goeffrey saw this, because he was very happy; Nina gave him the sympathy and encouragement which a temperament such as his demanded and he looked forward to his visits very eagerly. There were not as many opportunities to have her to himself as he would have liked, something always seemed to be going on. Mr. Arthur Vernay, who had a place near by, was often there and other people whom they knew and who made up a little colony in the neighborhood, but he was not unreasonable about it and a whispered word at bedtime, a clasp of the hand, a kiss, or a confidential chat, would send him back to town quite happy.

One night he heard a light step on the stairs and

Doris had come to see him. He began telling her at once about his building.

"Shall I show you the plans?"

"No! don't, Goeffrey; I wouldn't understand them. Where are the cigarettes?"

She took one and lighted it.

"And about the other thing,— Miss Davidge."

"Oh, it's all right again," Goeffrey answered. "She has forgiven me and everything is as it was before. What a fool I was to do what I did, to let those people, whom I hardly expected ever to see again, come there that night, of all nights."

"Oh! is that the way you feel about it?" Doris answered.

"I didn't feel that way about you," said Goeffrey. "If it hadn't been that I wanted to see you, I wouldn't have let them come."

"And you are going to make a lot of money — and so quickly — it is very clever of you, Goeffrey."

"Well," said Goeffrey, rubbing his hands together, "of course I'm not out of the woods yet — but if I do get through with it, I think I will have done pretty well — come in here a minute," he added, "I *must* show it to you," and he led the way into his draughting-room. "This," he said, spreading out a plan of one of the floors, "is to be our apartment, the drawing-room is to be on the corner with windows facing south and east. It is quite small, because we have decided to be very economical, but we have arranged everything to suit ourselves and while there are not many of them, the

rooms themselves are large. The drawing-room and the dining-room open into each other and the bedrooms, there are only two, are quite at the other end. We wanted to have a guest-room, but we couldn't squeeze it in anyhow. I wish we could though, then you could come and visit us."

"Oh! thanks," answered Doris rather shortly.

As she was leaving, Goeffrey said to her:

"When are you coming again?"

"I told you, don't you remember, that I wouldn't come after you and Miss Davidge had made friends?"

Goeffrey hesitated. "I like to have you come," he said at length, "do you think there's any harm in it?"

"Do you really like me to, Goeffrey?"

"Really and truly, please come, won't you?"

"I shan't promise — perhaps."

When Goeffrey had purchased Eckstein's lot, he had in the bank as he had said, twenty thousand dollars — the residue of the balance he had divided with Richard and the proceeds of the sale of his motor and a few pieces of exceptionally fine furniture. Five thousand of this he had given as purchase money to Eckstein and nine thousand had been paid out to his various contractors, in order to carry on the work until his first payment was due. At last the time arrived when he could make application for it and a few days after he was summoned to Eckstein's office who offered him a cheque for some five thousand less than the stipulated sum. Goeffrey, who knew that it would take every penny of the full amount, and that even then he would have to induce

his contractors to accept less than they expected, was staggered.

"Look at your contract," said Eckstein, "haven't you read it? All interest charges are to be deducted from your payments."

"But I can't get along on that," Goeffrey answered.

"You can't expect to do the thing entirely with my money," Eckstein returned, a statement quite in contradiction to some of his earlier arguments, "use some of your own."

"I have," said Goeffrey, "nearly ten thousand dollars."

"You have?" replied Eckstein. "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll give you the full amount and not deduct the interest due, but you'll have to sign a paper that I am not abrogating any of my rights by doing so."

Eckstein drew up a paper. Its purport was simply what he had stated it would be and Goeffrey signed it and got his cheque. He banked it at once, and distributed it proportionately among his contractors. This money with what he had already paid, while not meeting in full the applications made upon him, seemed to satisfy them and the work went on; and Goeffrey breathed a deep sigh of relief. But now new difficulties presented themselves. Dealing with the different trades individually and directly, instead of through one contractor, responsibility was divided. Attempts were continually made to shirk it and to shift it to others. Where the slightest ambiguity was discovered in the

specifications, advantage was taken of it and demands made for more money, on the ground that owing to lack of lucidity, more was being called for than they had estimated on. At times work of various kinds was stopped until these demands were accepted in writing. Mistakes were made and not rectified, unless the most vigorous protestations were made and even then after vexatious delays. Goeffrey found that in many cases constant and rigid inspection was necessary. His assistant Stackpool was invaluable, and he admitted to himself that without him he would have been helpless. Quarrels and bickerings arose among the smaller contractors, arguments as to where one's task ended and another's began. Often delay on one kind of work would retard and at times totally stop progress on other kinds. And without ceasing, Goeffrey was striving to make things run smoothly — make things fit — to grow together — drawings were turned out constantly, each thing required in the construction was interdependent on some other thing. And the main point was haste. Stackpool pointed out the vital importance of having the apartments ready for rental by early autumn, otherwise, the building would stand empty for the winter which would prove fatal to the success of the project. And so Goeffrey worked, worked night and day. He began to get thin, forgot his barber, often went without shaving — his clothes were wrinkled and filled with the dust of the building, he slept badly, he had taken up the struggle — he had become one of the horde.

One morning on getting there, he found the building

deserted and was told that a labor delegate had discovered that one of the contractors had been employing non-union workmen. Every man in the building had been ordered out of it and two weeks passed in negotiations and threats before the unions permitted work to be resumed.

And summer had come with its heat, its melting days of blazing sunshine, its breathless nights. He heard everywhere the clanging of iron, the rattle of riveting machines, saw man's struggle with the enormous inertia of matter, carried on it seemed more fiercely under the tropic heat than at other times, saw here another world, a world ignorant of ideals, of beauty, of grace, of anything except of matter; of lifting it, fashioning it, shaping it, fabricating it, fitting it into buildings, piling it story on story. A world of straining effort, of dust, dirt, terrific sounds, sweat and exhaustion.

One night after lying for hours in the lifeless air of his room, he fell into a fitful sleep and his old dream came back to him. He thought that he was a little boy again and that his mother came and sat beside him and climbing up to her, they clung together, oh so closely, and that after that dear embrace she had put him in his bed again and had gone away, calling to him softly from afar, Good-by!

Goeffrey changed a little after that night. It seemed as if his dream had been the means of opening the door of a chamber in which his past had been locked away. He began to think of it, the days of his youth abroad, of Italy, of many things he had forgotten, and with these thoughts, there grew slowly a distaste for

what he was engaged in, and in the evening after a day of struggle, of fatigue, he would find himself dreaming of the sea, the olive groves, the little pavilion from which he used to watch the mountains from afar. But still he struggled on. The point was reached where his second payment was due and Eckstein gave it to him, again waiving his right to deduct interest, but when as he had done before, he divided it proportionately, a storm of protest arose, threats of liens were made and in order to prevent work from being stopped, he found it necessary to add five thousand dollars of his own money and the work continued, but not as energetically as before. He had now a thousand dollars to his credit at his bank.

At the end of that week while at Lowlands, Nina had said to him:

"Aren't things going well, Goeffrey? you look worried."

"Pretty well," he answered.

"No, you must tell me. They are not going well — I know it."

"Not very well, dear," he said. "But why bother you about it, I've got to work it out myself. No one can help me."

"But I *want* to know. You ought to tell me. Who should know about it, if not I?"

So Goeffrey told her. He began at first with a general outline of the situation, omitting the more discouraging details, hoping to satisfy her curiosity, but her shrewd questions, revealing a surprisingly practical business instinct, soon drew from him the true state of

affairs. That his own money was gone, and that his only chance of success lay in inducing the contractors to complete their work on the insufficient payments still to become due from Eckstein.

When he had finished, she sat quite still for a moment, and then with a flush of anger and contempt, she said:

"Well, really, Goeffrey, I don't see how you could possibly have mismanaged it more beautifully than you have."

Her tone was so bitter, so full of reproach, that Goeffrey was staggered.

"But how could I have done differently," he answered in despair, "once I had gone into it?"

"Differently! surely now that you have put all of your own money into it, you can see that he will take it away from you." She made an impatient gesture. "What are you going to do now?"

"Try to go ahead."

"You talk like a child. You can't do anything without more money. Can't you see that?"

"I haven't any money, and I can't get it," he answered.

She jumped up from her chair, "Good-night," she said abruptly.

"Nina! please," he exclaimed, starting after her.

"I can't talk to you," she answered. "You have disappointed me too much."

He did not see her again that night and went back to town early the next morning more miserable than ever.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Goeffrey did not go to Lowlands on the following week. Nina had written him that she was not well, and had asked him to postpone his visit. On the week after, he found that there were so many things demanding his attention, that he wrote in turn putting it off again. He received no reply to his note.

The demands for money had become more and more insistent, but he struggled desperately, trying to keep the work from coming to a standstill before the next payment fell due from Eckstein, expending in this way, in small sums, here and there, the remaining money he had on hand. During the third week after his talk with Nina, he succeeded in reaching the desired point and went to see Eckstein. Upon hearing his demand, the Jew took out some papers, busied himself with his pencil and at last looked up.

"You will remember," he said, "that I have never, since you started, deducted any interest charges from your payments, as I had a right to do under our contract."

"Yes," answered Goeffrey, "I remember."

"I did this at your request and because I wanted to help you all I could, but at the same time in order to protect myself, I asked you to sign a paper stipulating that it would not jeopardize my rights in any way

and that the deductions might be made at any future time I should see fit. Do you remember that?"

"I remember signing something like that — but —"

"Do you remember it or don't you?" the Jew answered roughly.

"Yes," Goeffrey answered.

"I have been figuring it up," Eckstein went on, "and I find that the accumulated charges against you amount to fifteen hundred dollars more than the payment which you now claim is due."

"I haven't figured it up," answered Goeffrey, "but admitting that you are right — what then?"

"I must not only refuse to make this payment, but must also demand from you the additional fifteen hundred which is due me."

"You refuse to make this payment?" asked Goeffrey slowly.

"Yes, I refuse."

"You know what the result will be?"

"My dear fellow," Eckstein replied, "I'm not in this for my health — I am in it to make money. I didn't go into it as a philanthropist. I made a contract with you and I have carried out my part to the letter — if you can't live up to yours, I must protect myself."

"You understand I suppose that work will be stopped."

"I can't help it," answered Eckstein.

"Is that your last word," asked Goeffrey, "you intend to pay me no more money?"

"I will pay you all the money our contract stipulates when you have lived up to it," Eckstein answered; then he said, "Why don't you borrow enough to see you through?"

Goeffrey got up and went out without answering him. He felt that Eckstein had brought about this crisis in his affairs deliberately, but until later he did not understand that it was done so that Eckstein would obtain a half finished building for half its value and complete it himself. Eckstein would foreclose, buy in his property at the amount of his own incumbrance on it, or if for less secure a judgment against Goeffrey for the difference. In either case, all of the contractors would lose everything, less the insufficient payments with which Goeffrey had induced them to go on. Goeffrey didn't feel particularly sorry for them, they had cheated him when they could, nor was he sorry for himself, but he was for Eckstein, it seemed such a sordid game. Any man dirty and mean enough to go into it seemed to him to deserve pity.

He knew that there would be numerous callers at his office, all with the same object, and he did not feel equal to going through with the difficult and humiliating task of telling them that he hadn't any money, nor that he was likely to have. He spent the whole afternoon in his club, dined there and went back to his rooms about nine. He lighted his lamp and turned to his desk. A letter addressed in Nina's handwriting lay on it.

Doris came up the stairs to Goeffrey's sitting-room

an hour later. As was her wont, she tapped twice, waited, tapped again and then as there was no answer, she opened the door and went in. Goeffrey sat in a mood of such deep abstraction, that he did not hear her and she stood quite still for a moment looking at him. She noticed for the first time how he had changed, how thin he had grown, the lines in his face, the disorder of his clothing, his dusty boots; and her heart smote her with an almost uncontrollable emotion of love and pity. Poor Goeffrey — he had been in the battle, he had become one of the horde, but he was not strong enough, she knew that, and with her whole strength she longed to fight for him, to receive the blows aimed at him even to death.

She shut the door with sufficient force to attract his attention, and went over to him.

"What is it?" she said. "I knocked and you didn't hear me, so I came in," and then as he did not answer her, only looking at her in a sort of dumb and appealing way, she repeated, "What is it, Goeffrey?" And leaning forward she put her hand on his shoulder.

"It's over," he answered thickly.

"What is over?" she asked.

"Everything."

"Do you mean the building; has anything happened to it?"

"Yes, they have stopped work on it, I am — and then — well —" Suddenly he picked up a letter from the table and handed it to her, "everything is over."

Doris read the letter.

"Dear Goeffrey — It will give me great, great pain to write this, but I know it is necessary and so I must, even if it should cause you to be very unhappy and to harbor toward me feelings of resentment. I do not believe that it will ever be possible for us to marry, and if you will look at it calmly, I think you will agree with me. Do you remember once last winter asking me whether I thought it true that money was the most essential thing in life? I mean a great deal of money, and my saying yes? And I do think so, Goeffrey — blame me as you will, think as hardly of me as you will, I cannot bring myself to face the prospect of living without it even with you and so I must ask you to consider our engagement at an end. Forgive me, Goeffrey dear, you cannot guess how hard it is for me to write this — but it must be — and so good-by — again forgive me — and good-by."

A blaze of hatred flashed in Doris's face, but she saw his eyes still fixed on her with that dumb appealing look, and getting up, she took his hand and kissed it, as she had done once before.

"I am so sorry, dear," she said, and she blushed, blushed at that kiss, at that tender word, but he seemed not to notice them.

"She is right," he said at last.

Doris's hatred blazed up again. "How right?" she asked.

"Don't you see — it's the way she was brought up — to have everything? She knows that I couldn't give her what she has been used to and that it would make

me miserable not to be able to —" he stopped and Doris realized by his manner, his strained way of speaking and a certain muscular twitching of his hands, that his nerves, long under a tense and unaccustomed strain, were almost at breaking point.

"But if I could only have finished the building," he went on, "it would have been all right. It seems as if some evil fate was pursuing me. I knew how much depended on it — my whole future, and if ever a man worked I did — night and day — because I was working for her and for my own happiness — and I failed."

"Yes," said Doris, "and that's all she sees — your failure — all the efforts you have made don't matter to her — all your labor — that doesn't count — if you could have given her what she wanted — very well — if not, she is done with you. Does she think of you? No, only of herself."

"I will never believe that," Goeffrey answered.

"But she admits it — she *has* the grace to do that — you can't give her money so she will find someone who will. It's all one to her."

Goeffrey got up and going over to his desk sat down before it and began putting together the papers with which its top was strewn.

"I shall not discuss it with you," he said coldly, without looking at her.

Neither spoke for a time and then Doris got up.

"I'm sorry, Goeffrey, I've offended you, I'm sorry."

"It's all right," he said, "it doesn't matter. Nothing matters very much now," and he turned again to his desk.

Doris looked at him with a gaze full of devotion. She longed to say to him, "Let *me* show you what love is, you think that *she* knows — let me show you how I can love, how with every atom of my mind and body I can devote myself to you. I shall not demand great things of you, I will do great things and ask for nothing except yourself."

"Good-night, Goeffrey," she said.

"Good-night," he answered. He did not turn toward her and she went out.

This was what she had foreseen and what she had hoped for, a break between Goeffrey and her rival. She had kept the letter believing that what had, would take place and saying always to herself, that afterwards, "Perhaps, perhaps!" She never analyzed that word, because, half unconsciously, she felt that she would find herself face to face with a hope which she knew that she could never realize. The hope of escaping the consequences of her past, of becoming something different, something new, with which her old life had no connection; but she realized now that she could not do this, that not to give Goeffrey his letter was impossible, that he must have it and at once. A feeling of despair seized her. She experienced a keen foreboding that it would be the means of separating her from Goeffrey forever, and she clung to him. He stood for not only what he was himself to her, but for all that she wanted, longed for in life. She felt as if she were in a room without light through whose open door she could see a place of brightness and beauty and that she must close that door forever and leave herself in darkness.

She had turned toward Fifth Avenue and as she reached it, walked up it mechanically. It was almost deserted—the mellow sounds of a summer evening came to her. She walked on and on—suddenly she turned back again. She had said to herself that she would go to him and tell him everything—that she had kept his letter, but that she loved him—beg him to forgive her, beg him on her knees to take her, to let her be always near him—and then realizing the futility of such a course, she again turned and went north.

She reached the park, and entering began walking through its leafy paths. A soft wind rose with a murmur and died again. Lamps shone through the branches of the trees. On the benches in the deep shadows, she discerned vague forms. Subdued voices were audible to her, issuing from the darkness. She heard laughter, and, it seemed to her, the faint sound of sighs and kisses. In this warmth, in the velvet softness of night, it seemed as if nature and man had given themselves up to the lassitude of love—and again that wish to go back to him possessed her.

Seeing an unoccupied bench, she sat down. She must think well what to do. To send Goeffrey his letter meant too that she would rouse Pandolfi's uncontrollable anger. On the one hand, if she kept it, things would remain as they were. On the other—She got up again and started walking rapidly—she knew that Pandolfi might be capable of almost any violence and although she took this into consideration, her fearless and resolute nature once she decided what to do, would

not allow the thought of his possible brutality to intimidate her. There was only one course possible to her — to return it. She had closed the door through which for a time she had allowed herself to see a bright and alluring prospect. Bright but vain — alluring but hopeless.

At least she would be honest. She must begin now to make herself, in so far as she could, worthy of the man she loved, even if by doing so, she lost him. Her action would end her life with Pandolfi and for that she was glad, even though the future seemed to hold for her nothing but poverty and privation.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when she reached her house. She let herself in and went upstairs to the drawing-room. She had forgotten for a moment where the switch was placed by which the lights were turned on, and as she stood there in the darkness, she felt that intangible something about her, which one feels in no place except in that which is one's own, the atmosphere of home, and it wrung her heart.

Going to her bedroom which was at the rear of the house on the drawing-room floor, she took the letter from its hiding-place, laboriously printed Goeffrey's address on an envelope, the more effectually to conceal the identity of the sender, enclosed the letter in it, took it out, posted it and came back to wait for Pandolfi.

To wait for Pandolfi and what besides? — Another thing might be coming to her too — striding silently by Ernesto's side. She had thought for a moment of leaving him a note explaining what she had done, but

she had put the idea aside at once — she was no coward. She had told him she would tell him, and she would do so face to face.

Going to her desk, she picked up a little antique silver box which she had once admired at Goeffrey's and which he had insisted on her taking, kissed it, and put it in her purse. And opening one of the drawers, she took out some bills and counted them — nearly a hundred dollars. Should she take them? — she must, what could she do without a little money at least. She imagined herself alone, in the streets, penniless, at night. And as she thought suddenly of the possible consequences of her act, terror seized her for a moment and threatened to break that grip of self-control with which she was holding herself.

She put the money in her purse and at that moment she heard the outer door shut and Pandolfi's step on the stairs. A deadly terror seized her. He came into the room, wiping his face with his handkerchief. He wore an evening jacket, a soft pleated shirt, a black tie and carried in his hand a panama hat which he tossed to the seat of a chair.

"I've been to see Irma in the 'Blackbird,'" he said, going quickly to a small table and pouring out a glass of water in which some sliced limes were soaking, a drink of which he was very fond — "but it's beyond her — she's handsome enough, but she can't act. I've always said that."

He sat down and lighted a cigarette and then as he noticed her pallor, and that she was standing, look-

ing at him fixedly with her hat on, he said in surprise:

“What’s the matter?”

“You remember the letter you wanted me to give you?” she said, fighting against her overwhelming terror of him, “the one which belongs to Goeffrey?”

“Yes, what of it?”

“I have sent it to him.”

Pandolfi put his hand to his head as if he had received a blow, his face became bloodless and he seemed to collapse in his chair. The effect of her words on him was so terrific, that it startled her, but it relieved her too, because she thought for an instant that it might mitigate his first burst of rage; but in a moment he was on his feet; a chair stood in his way and as he made its circuit, Doris leaped to a table standing so that it was between them, and seizing a long and sharp stiletto, which Pandolfi had given her long before and which she used as a paper knife, she said with a sort of cold and despairing fury:

“Listen, Ernesto, if you try to touch me, if you come one step nearer, I swear that I shall kill myself — I swear it.”

Pandolfi stopped; something convinced him that she meant fully what she said, that she didn’t care, that life meant nothing to her. At that moment, if he had had her in his grasp, the probability is that his own violence would have excited him to murder, but to be placed in a position where a step on his part might result in her death, by her own hand, brought an ele-

ment of deliberation into the situation which checked him sharply. At the same time this restraint on his desire to do her physical injury, heightened if possible his rage and resentment. He poured out a torrent of abuse, vituperation, curses, insults.

"Get out," he said, "into the street where you belong—I took you from there, go back again—do you hear, get out! No, wait, I'll show you something." He rushed into her bedroom—she was afraid to leave the protecting rampart of the table, but from where she stood she could see him. He began the ferocious destruction of every object which through use or association she might feel a personal interest in. The things on her bureau, pictures, lamps. Her hats he pulled to pieces. Suddenly he appeared in the drawing-room, his arms piled with her gowns, and began to rend them, all the time heaping her with abuse and recrimination. This work of destruction finished, he saw her purse.

"Give it to me!" he shouted.

She threw it to him and, opening it, he tore the bills in pieces, ground the little box under foot, and bursting its metal chain work, tossed it aside.

"Your rings!"

She took them off and put them on the table.

"Now," he said, "go! get out!"

Doris, without a word, still grasping the stiletto, went slowly and unsteadily down the stairs and into the street.

## CHAPTER XIX

GOEFFREY found in his box the next morning, a letter addressed to him in awkwardly printed characters. On opening the envelope, he found another within it, crumpled and soiled, on which his name was written in the unmistakable handwriting of Mr. Davidge. He felt sure from the momentary glimpse he had had of it, when Nina had placed it on the table on the night of the party, that it was the missing letter and he opened it eagerly. Within was another envelope still in Davidge's hand, addressed to Francis Storey, Esq.

Deeply disappointed and yet encouraged, too, by the thought that Davidge's purpose might have been to enlist Storey's help in a matter where Goeffrey himself would have been helpless, he determined to deliver it at once. He looked at his watch. Storey lived not far away and might not yet have gone downtown.

The servant took his card, saying that he was afraid that Mr. Storey was not at home, but returned almost at once and led Goeffrey to a large room on the second floor running the entire width of the house. It was a lofty room, and as he went in he was aware of superb tapestries hanging against its paneled walls, and the glow of numerous porcelains arranged in cabinets and on consoles — a portion, no doubt, of Storey's incomparable collection.

Storey was standing at one end of the room. The furniture had been pushed back and he was looking at a rug which was spread on the floor — a beautiful rose-colored Ispahan carpet of the XVI century, ten yards long.

“What do you think of it, Goeffrey?” Storey asked as he came in.

Goeffrey looked at the delicate beauty of its worn and faded surface, at the extraordinary grace and distinction of its arabesques, and a feeling of exaltation rose in him — a sense of extreme happiness. He said nothing, but he looked at Storey and smiled and Storey understood.

“You have fallen in love with it,” he said, “you are enamored of it, you have the spirit of the true collector. Ten years ago I saw this rug in England and from that day I determined that sometime I would become its owner. I have dreamed of having it as I might dream of possessing a woman — and now it is mine. Only the collector is different from the lover of women, because he has many loves and can be faithful to them all.”

“And they to him,” answered Goeffrey. “There are worse things than being a collector. I have been one, as much as my means would allow, and whenever I come back to my pieces, I find them always the same, always waiting for me, beautiful, graceful, and mysterious. Like women, but constant.”

“And are there not women who are constant?”

“Perhaps,” answered Goeffrey, “superlative ones.”

"Find a superlative one, then," Storey said, "that is what you look for in art. Find it in a woman and you will not complain."

"But every man finds a superlative one, or thinks he does; how is he to know for certain?"

"Think a thing sincerely enough and you will make a fact of it so far as you are concerned. Is there any logic by which I can prove that this rug is beautiful? But are you in search of the superlative woman? The last time I saw you, you were about to engage in business. Don't try to carry on the two occupations at once, my boy; one of them is bound to suffer."

"I'm not engaged in either, just at present," Geoffrey answered.

Storey's piercing eyes, for the first time, took Geoffrey in from head to foot with a quick glance of personal scrutiny.

"Sit down," he said, "I want to ask you a question or two."

And under his questioning, Geoffrey told his story, the story of his building speculation and its disastrous result. Pride kept him from revealing, however, how penniless it had really left him. When he had finished, Storey regarded him with a look of commiseration.

"You had no chance," he said; "your Jewish friend never intended that you should have. Did you ask no one's advice before going into it?"

"I asked Bruce, my lawyer, and he told me not to, but I didn't want that kind of advice," answered Geof-

frey. "I wanted to do it and so I went ahead. You see if I had succeeded, I would have had a very nice little income."

"Truly, a European education doesn't fit one to cope with American business methods," Storey said with a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"I don't think it is a question of education," replied Goeffrey, "but of character. One can't generalize like that. Take Richard and myself. We were brought up in almost the same way. He can't earn anything but I am not prepared to admit that I can't — not yet, anyway."

"Your illustration is a good one," Storey answered with a touch of sarcasm, "but I would reverse the application of it if I were you; your cousin seems to be quite able to take care of himself. And what will you do now?" he continued, after a moment.

"I'm a pretty good draughtsman," Goeffrey answered, "and I shall get a position with someone. Later if I can get a commission or two, I shall start in for myself again."

"But you are too much in debt, you could never start again unless you paid your creditors. Is there no way of doing it?"

"That brings me to what I came to see you about," said Goeffrey, taking the letter out of his pocket. "When Mr. Davidge failed, he left a letter with his sister saying that it was most important that I should get it at once. It was brought to me that night but there were a lot of people there and when they had gone,

I couldn't find it anywhere. This morning I got an envelope with my address printed on it and opening it, I found what I am sure was the letter which was brought to my rooms that night. I opened it and in it was another envelope addressed to you. That's why I came here this morning."

Storey took it, opened the envelope and began to read. There were a dozen closely written pages. He read it through very carefully and deliberately and then re-read it.

"You say," he said at last, "that there were a number of people in your rooms the night this letter disappeared? Have you any reason for thinking that one of them might have stolen it?"

"I have always suspected one person," Goeffrey answered.

"Whom?" asked Storey.

"Pandolfi."

Storey got up, putting the letter in his pocket.

"Your father, Davidge and I were friends from boyhood," he said, "and on the ground of that friendship, Davidge asks me to do a certain thing. It is a singular request and whether I can do as he asks, I am not sure. If I do, it will be for the sake of your father and your father's son, not for his —" someone knocked, a door opened and Storey's secretary came into the room. "I will be with you at once, Drayton," he said, and turning to Goeffrey, he went on: "Davidge asks me to get back for you, the money he lost — he tells me where it is. Whether I can do

so or not, is hard to say. Even if I am able to, it will take time, months perhaps, perhaps not at all. But remember one thing, don't tell anyone that you have received the letter or that you have seen me. If I should want you, I will send for you."

"Oh!" thought Goeffrey to himself, as he walked home again, "to get my money back! If I only could." But true to his temperament, his mind turned quite as often to the contemplation of that Persian carpet with its subtle and elegant tracery and the delicate rose color of its worn and faded surface—and he walked back to his office, forgetting for the moment the storm his inability to pay would arouse among his creditors.

And what a storm. Goeffrey dreading it as he did, found that he had far underestimated its violence. For a fortnight he was the recipient of constant calls, duns, threats, reproaches and repeated requests for explanations as to why there was no money, why he had induced them to put theirs in, when he was so poorly provided with it himself, that he was doomed to failure. Eckstein meanwhile went steadily on with his scheme of getting possession of the property. He made formal demand on Goeffrey for the overdue interest and after a short interval began suit to foreclose. The claims of all the contractors were also filed and suit in every case brought against him. He became so used to that document called a summons, that he would merely post it to his lawyer without even looking to find out who the new litigant might be.

After the storm had passed and his creditors, convinced of the impossibility of getting anything from him, had resigned themselves to waiting for the trials of their suits against him, Goeffrey, taking stock of his immediately available assets one morning, found that he possessed a ten dollar bill and some loose change. He put up at auction at once the furniture which he had loaned Richard. It was out of season for such sales, but he could not wait and he watched, with a sinking heart, his beautiful pieces being knocked down at a tenth of their value, but it netted him a few hundred dollars which at least would provide for the needs of his immediate future — and a week later, Stackpool, who had left him at the time of his failure, wrote him that the architects who had employed him, were seeking the services of a draughtsman with a French training.

Goeffrey called at once and was engaged on approbation at a salary of thirty dollars a week, and by great good luck he had an opportunity to rent his large front room which he had used as a draughting-room, keeping his bedroom and sitting-room as he had done before.

A new life began for him. He arrived at the office at nine, worked until noon, lunched at a cheap restaurant as quickly as possible, worked again until five and went home. The close and unaccustomed application which his work demanded, tired him to such a degree that he would lie down almost always and sleep until time for dinner, which he would have at

some small table d'hôte place of which there were several close at hand.

He rarely walked, except at night, because he had an inexplicable feeling that he must not be seen by people he had known before, a feeling that in becoming poor he had been guilty of some imprudent and compromising act which had made him impossible. He thought often of this. He was the same Goeffrey, his complexion, eyes, hair and body were the same, even his clothes of which he still had a good store of extremely smart ones when he chose to wear them, had not appreciably deteriorated — spiritually he was no better or no worse than before, but admitting all this, he was certain that in becoming poor, he had done something of which both he and they must be ashamed. He had been helped in reaching this conclusion by an unmistakable attitude toward him, shown by one or two people whom he had met by accident. They had been neither cold nor rude; on the contrary, they had plainly sympathized with him, but he could see that to them Goeffrey Hunter stood for thirty thousand a year, and that Goeffrey without it, was a very different person.

Could it be, he asked himself, that Nina was like that too? No, he could not admit it. He would never lose faith in her. She had simply taken the perfectly rational view that it was impossible for them to marry under the circumstances. She had not said that it must never be thought of; simply that she could not face a life of what to her would be poverty, and she

had been courageous enough to say so. He had written her almost frenzied letters at first which she never answered, but why should she? Why should she encourage him to hope? She was strong that was all — she had the strength to face an impossible situation and to end it too, no matter how much pain it might cause her, and Goeffrey pictured her to himself waiting, and hoping silently, determined that neither should nurse false hopes, but longing hourly for some change of fortune which would unite them again.

So Goeffrey spent his evenings in dreaming; dreaming of the time when Storey having secured his money for him, he would go to her and find her waiting — of how going into some room where she was, she would look up with great joy at seeing him, knowing that he would not be there unless he had come into his own again.

Other dreams too occupied his thoughts at times; dreams of his past, of Italy, of his life in Paris; scenes would arise up before him possessing peculiar and tender charms, yet fraught with feelings of poignant regret.

Autumn came, and with the first hint of frost, the city changed; woke from its languorous ease and became hard, glittering, brilliant and relentless. The streets became crowded, the long lines of motors with their yellow lamps began to move again, north and south, and in the buildings a million lights gleamed in the clear air.

Goeffrey came in late one afternoon, shivering from the cold. He had laid in a stock of coal and all the way home he had been thinking how grateful the cheerful warmth of his fire would be — the first of the season. He touched a match to the kindlings, lighted his lamp and drew the curtains. He sat down and watched the blaze mount higher and higher. His blood still tingled. How cosy it was and yet how isolated his life. He thought of the streets he had just left; of the crowds revived by the elixir of the frosty air. He thought of the gray and wintry sky — the town seemed suddenly to be filled with innumerable activities, opportunities, adventures, in which he had no share. Whether here or in the streets, he was alone, without real companionship and he realized that his sense of loneliness and isolation had been growing until it was almost insupportable. It seemed as if he had become again that friendless little boy he had been so long before.

The street door was opened and shut again below and he heard the sound of steps on the uncarpeted stairs. They came up slowly and rather shufflingly, stopped outside his door and a knock sounded on its panel. Goeffrey got up and opened it and gave an exclamation of joy. Mr. Bancroft stood there.

"I *am* glad to see you," he said, shaking the old man's dry, bony hand. "You have been away I suppose and the cool weather has brought you back as it has the others. The continent as usual?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Bancroft, settling himself in

one of the two armchairs which stood on the hearth rug, "my old haunts; and some other places—but I'm getting too old, my boy—it's too gay for me, I don't think I shall go again. Now this is very nice," he added, looking about him. "It's comfortable and warm and quiet and you have a sense of isolation here which is very pleasant. I like it."

"Well, I don't," said Goeffrey, "I never see anyone."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Bancroft.

"One reason of course is, that it has been summer," Goeffrey answered, "and everyone has been away—and then I've been busy."

"No word from your precious cousin?"

"No—no word," Goeffrey answered. "Miss Davidge told me in June that they would be abroad until autumn. Did you see or hear of them while you were there?"

"Both," Mr. Bancroft replied.

"Are they—ah—are they—" began Goeffrey.

"No, they're not," interrupted Mr. Bancroft. "How could you expect it?"

"I didn't, really, but I hoped," Goeffrey replied.

"I neither expected nor hoped, I knew it to be impossible," said the old man. "I met them," he went on, "in London, we were stopping at the same hotel. She was very kind to me. She asked me to forgive her for something she had said to me just before they sailed from here in the spring, as if I could even have remembered it. There isn't much to tell. They had

been married three months when I saw them and it was over."

"Does she no longer love him?" asked Goeffrey.

"Who can tell?" Mr. Bancroft answered. "It seemed to me that she was searching with a sort of despair in the dross of his nature for some hidden jewel which she might set up and worship — knowing that she would never find it. To my mind, the love of a woman is a precious thing and yet how lightly men regard it," — he paused for a moment — "she has changed," he added, "a good deal. She talked to me one night about him and when she praised his amiability, I knew that she was apologizing secretly for his unstable and selfish nature — but she said, as if in spite of herself, 'but if there should ever be another woman, it would kill me.' In her heart she knows him, knows that she has given herself, all that she has to give, to a man who cares not one iota for her, who deceived her deliberately because she was rich, and who would commit that crowning wrong against her without one moment's hesitation and without compunction. I saw her again in Switzerland. I was just leaving for England to sail for home. She said that her husband had stopped in Paris for a few days on business and was to join her at once. They were to stay for a fortnight and were then coming back too — reaching here the end of this month. On my way north, I stopped for a few days at Paris. One night, in that little café at the head of the Rue d'Antin, a friend, who was with me, pointing out some

of the celebrities of the half world who were there, called my attention, among others, to a young, dark and good looking woman who, he told me, was a dancer—a gutter bred Parisian brat—who had just returned from an amazing success in London. I would never have thought of her again had it not been that coming in from Chantilly on the following day, I saw her in a motor with your cousin. Truly, society produces strange monstrosities, but wait! He still has me to deal with. I will ruin him yet—with his heartlessness, his selfishness, his broken promises.”

He sat musingly for a moment and then looked up quickly.

“From the way I come here and curse your cousin, one might think that I considered you responsible for him, but I don’t—have you dined? You say you’re lonely—well, so am I—dine with me—we may cheer each other up.”

Goeffrey jumped up with alacrity—dining with an old gentleman of seventy could hardly be looked upon as an adventure, but it was a most welcome change from the monotony of his existence.

They went into the street. The wind had risen and snow was beginning to fall. Mr. Bancroft turned into Delmonico’s, found an unoccupied table in the corner of the café and ordered a dinner, such as Goeffrey had not tasted for many months. The ugly room looked extraordinarily attractive to him, and under the influence of the music, which came to them at intervals from a distance, and Mr. Bancroft’s favorite burgundy, his

spirits rose quickly, and even his companion, aside from an occasional reference to his beloved Constance, the thought of whom was never long absent from his mind, seemed to have put aside the concern for her which obsessed him.

At ten o'clock, however, he paid his bill and said, "I have turned over a new leaf since I saw you last — I go to bed early. But how is it with you? Constance asked particularly about you, and about Storey. I neglected to ask you — and Miss Nina, is all going well with you — when are you to be married?"

"For the present, we've given up all thought of that," Goeffrey answered. "You see I haven't been doing very well and I couldn't support her properly — not at present, at least."

"But she has five thousand a year, which her father couldn't get hold of. That, with what you could earn, wouldn't be poverty exactly. But young people look at such things differently in these days I suppose." And he got up from the table.

Goeffrey could hardly conceal his surprise; five-thousand a year! He had never known that before, how very strange. He bade Mr. Bancroft good-night and they separated at the corner. As he walked homeward, a cloud seemed to have settled down on him, a depression he could not shake off. Nina had never told him of this — not that it would have made their marriage more possible, but she had never told him; for the first time he began to doubt — to feel that per-

haps she was not as ingenuous as he had always believed her to be.

The first storm of winter had begun furiously. The crowds and the lights had vanished, the deserted streets were already white with snow, a biting wind blew. He turned up the collar of his coat and shivered. As he neared his house, he saw a woman standing on the pavement opposite, looking up at it—a street lamp burned at a little distance and he thought from her figure and the glint of her fair hair, that it was Doris. The snow and the sound of the wind deadened his footsteps and she was looking at the house so intently that she did not see him until she heard her name and turned toward him with a start.

“Doris,” he said, “it is so long since I’ve seen you—were you coming in?”

“Oh, no!” she answered, almost wrenching her hand from his. “I was passing and I looked at your windows—they were dark so I thought you didn’t live there any more,” and she began walking quickly away. “I must go now.”

“But you shouldn’t be alone on such a night. Let me take you to where you were going.”

She stopped and stamped her foot. “No! No! please, I won’t have you—it’s only a step—I’ll come to see you soon, let me go.”

She spoke with such intensity, in such an agitated voice, that Goeffrey stopped and she went on quickly without turning again. He was so puzzled by her behavior, that he paused on the steps of his house after

he had crossed the street and watched her. The block was a long one and he could see that her pace was much slower than at first and as she reached the distant corner it seemed to him that she turned and was coming back again. In a moment he was sure of it. Puzzled still more, he went into the shadow of the vestibule, feeling sure that it would conceal him, and waited. Presently she came within the line of his vision and stopped opposite the house as she had done before. Goeffrey watched her. He could not understand it. Why should she stand there before his house in such weather. Suddenly he darted across the street and caught her arm.

“Doris!” he exclaimed, “you are crying — what is it?” She struggled slightly, but he would not let her go. “Come in,” he said, “you must,” and he led, almost supported her across the street again and up the stairs to his door. He opened it quickly, locked it and turned up the student lamp which stood on the table. The fire which he had replenished before going out with Mr. Bancroft, was burning brightly. He led her to the sofa which stood before the fire between his easy chairs and made her sit down on it, taking a place beside her. He felt through her gloves that her hands were icy cold. “You are freezing,” he said. He pulled off the gloves and began chafing her hands. Suddenly she put her face against his shoulder and began to weep, quietly but terribly. Goeffrey put his arms around her and drew her to him closely as if to give her the warmth of his body and held her there while

she wept, wept unceasingly on his shoulder, shivering from time to time; held her until his arms ached, until her shivering stopped, then her sobs, and until hearing a long and trembling sigh, he looked and saw that she was asleep.

She slept so deeply that it did not wake her when he laid her on the sofa, placed a cushion under her head and covered her with a rug. He looked at his watch. It was midnight. Going into his pantry he took stock of his provisions. He knew that he was well supplied, because it was Saturday, and on Sunday he often got his own dinner. He was not an accomplished cook, but the simple things he could do, he did well. He would broil some chops for her and make coffee. He had some very good rolls and fresh butter — and he set to work. A little later, going into the sitting-room to lay the table, he saw that she was awake, lying as he had placed her and looking at the fire. Bending over her he said gently, “Are you warm now?”

“Oh, so deliciously warm,” she answered.

He noticed one of her boots which was not covered by the rug, and put his hand on it. “It is soaking wet!” he exclaimed. But what could she wear in their place? He was bewildered for a moment, then going to a cabinet, he took from it a pair of old brocade slippers he had picked up in Paris long ago — the kind called “mules” by the French.

“I believe they will just fit you,” he said. “Take off your shoes and hang your stockings in front of the

fire — they will dry in no time; your boots will take longer, but in the meantime you can wear the mules, by that time supper will be ready.” And he went into the pantry and shut the door. But when he came in later, he found that she had not moved.

“I’m too tired, Goeffrey,” she said.

“But I’m afraid you’ll take cold, let me unbutton them. Your stockings are pretty wet,” he said, “but if you will sit in a chair you can put your feet on a footstool and not bother to take them off.”

She obeyed him with a sort of pathetic humility. He drew up one of the easy chairs, placed the footstool for her and retired to the pantry again to complete his preparations. When he came out again she was putting on the slippers.

“They’re quite dry now,” she said.

He placed the small table before her and brought in their supper. When all was arranged, he sat down facing her. “I’ve made some coffee you see, it will do you good.”

They began without speaking. Goeffrey noticed that she ate with an effort, but that she drank her coffee with avidity. He filled her cup twice. When they had finished, Goeffrey said to her:

“Are you rested now?”

“Yes, Goeffrey.”

“Then perhaps I had better take you home — you are tired out; a good sleep will do you more good than anything — and if you will let me, I will come and see how you are in the morning.”

"Yes, Goeffrey," she repeated in the same humble and listless way. Goeffrey went to the telephone, but as he took the receiver from its hook, he saw that she was looking at him as if in terror.

"Goeffrey," she cried, "what are you doing?"

"I was going to call a cab," he answered, "it's so stormy."

"But Goeffrey, I have no place to go—no place—that's why I came to you—don't you want me, do you *want* me to go?"

She stood up wringing her hands and began to weep again. Goeffrey went quickly up to her and put his hands on her shoulders.

"Why, Doris, I didn't understand—of course you must stay. How could you think that I would not want you to. But you didn't tell me."

When he had quieted her, he remade his bed and reappeared with his sheets and blankets in his arms.

"Everything is ready now," he said. "You take my bed and I will sleep here on the sofa—no," as he saw that she was about to protest, "I insist; the sofa and I are old companions. Sleep as late as you like, to-morrow is Sunday and when you're ready, we'll have breakfast together. Good-night."

"Good-night, Goeffrey."

Goeffrey undressed quickly, put out his lamp and got into bed. In a few minutes he heard the door open and Doris said to him softly:

"Goeffrey."

"Yes, Doris."

"Might I leave the door open a little?"

"Yes, Doris, of course."

After a little, he called:

"Doris."

"Yes, Goeffrey."

"Are you all right?"

"Quite all right, thanks."

In a little while he called again.

"Doris."

But there was no answer.

Goeffrey lay and looked at the fire thinking about her. Why had she opened the door he asked himself, and was ashamed of himself the moment after. She was nervous and over-wrought and wanted to feel that someone was within call. But what could have happened to her — what ill fortune could have overtaken her to reduce her so quickly to such apparent poverty. He had noticed that she was not even warmly enough dressed. Poor Doris! But there was something delicious about having her there — poor little waif — a waif, yes, but a beautiful one — and a woman — yes, something delicious about it. What hair she had, what — the fire seemed to grow dim — and Goeffrey was asleep too.

## CHAPTER XX

BUT Doris did not satisfy Goeffrey's curiosity as to what had brought about so great a change in the material conditions of her life. When he awoke next morning, the sun was shining brightly, and looking at his watch, he saw that it was ten o'clock. The door to his bedroom was closed and he could hear her moving about inside. He dressed quickly, folded up his sheets and blankets, putting them away in a cupboard, lighted the fire, and then in response to his knock, learning that she would be ready in ten minutes, he hastened to prepare breakfast.

Before this, however, he had noticed her boots. They stood on the hearth with an air of irresolution as if they felt that something was expected of them, they knew not what, and in their shabbiness there seemed to lie such a reproach, that he took them into his pantry and polished them carefully, placing them by her door so that she would not fail to see them when she opened it. This act of his touched her deeply, but she did not even thank him, because she was afraid,—afraid that the self-control which she was gradually gaining over herself might be swept away again if she spoke of it.

When she came in to breakfast she looked much better

than she had the night before. Her hair was carefully done, and the delicate coloring of her peach-like skin had returned. Goeffrey felt again that delicious — that strangely sweet sensation of the night before, but whether it was because she was a woman and beautiful, or because she was Doris, he did not know.

The situation in which they found themselves was so unusual that breakfast, like dinner, passed almost in silence, but after Goeffrey had cleared the things away, he sat down beside her on the sofa.

“Can you tell me now, Doris? Perhaps I can help you.”

“I can’t, Goeffrey — I want your help, but will it be all right, if I don’t tell you? Sometime I may, but not now,” she answered.

“Do as you think best, Doris, of course,” he replied. “I only asked because I thought it might be necessary. Tell me how I can help you.”

“Soon after I saw you last, months ago, in the summer,” she answered, “something happened. The thing I can’t tell you — and I made up my mind that I would cut loose absolutely from every particle of my old life — the life of the theaters, of our old friends — they used to be yours too — and begin again in another way. I had never been happy in it and the thing I can’t tell you about gave me the courage to try. Well — I’ve had a hard time of it. Sometimes I haven’t been able to see how I could possibly get through another day and yet I always managed to somehow, until this week — and then — well, last night — when

I think of it it frightens me. I was trying to muster up courage to come and tell you, and when you spoke to me so suddenly I *couldn't*, it was impossible. But Goeffrey, I hadn't any other place to go — that I *would* go to, and I had to come back, and even then I couldn't make up my mind to come in — the humiliation of it — the — the — I was ashamed."

"Oh, Doris, ashamed to come to me. Haven't I been through all that myself? We are in the same boat."

"You!" exclaimed Doris. "Didn't you get —" and checked herself.

"Get finished with my building? why no, don't you remember, I told you about it?"

"Yes — you did — I had forgotten. But, Goeffrey, what are you doing now?"

"Working as a draughtsman in the office of an architect."

Doris looked at him in horror. "*You!* Goeffrey, how awful."

Goeffrey laughed. "I don't see anything very awful about it. I get a salary of thirty dollars a week and I have a few hundreds in the bank — quite enough for my needs and enough to take care of you, until I can find something for you to do, which will be quite easy. I'll tell you why." And he explained to her that he had thought at once of his cousin's wife, who had been Mrs. Aladine. Mr. Bancroft had been in the night before and had told him that she would be back in less than a fortnight, and among her many guilds

—her societies — her institutions — for which she did so much, she would be certain to have something where Doris could be of help to her.

“So we will consider it settled and think no more about it until she gets back,” he added, and getting up he opened the window for a moment. “It’s much warmer — what do you say to a walk, will it be too cold for you?”

“No, Goeffrey, I would like it.”

“Poor Doris,” he said, “you were so cold last night. To-morrow I will buy you a winter coat.”

“Will you, Goeffrey?” she answered with that air of humility, and again Goeffrey felt that strangely sweet sensation.

On going out they found the sun shining with such warmth, that the snow of the night before had vanished. The pavements were almost dry, and Fifth Avenue was thronged with its usual heterogeneous swarm of Sunday promenaders. As he walked with her, Goeffrey thought of his feelings of loneliness and isolation the day before, when he had come home out of the crowded streets, and how, since she had been there, not only had they disappeared, but he would have found it difficult to think of anyone whose companionship at that moment would have been so delightful to him. He thought of Nina, and as he wondered if he were being disloyal to her, Mr. Bancroft’s words came to his mind.

“If it is true — could she blame me?” he said to himself.

On reaching the park they had turned into it. It too was thronged with people, but under Doris's guidance, they found themselves at last in a narrow and deserted path. A bench, almost hidden by shrubbery, stood on one side of it.

"Shall we rest here for a little while?" she suggested. And when they were seated she said:

"Do you remember, Goeffrey, that last time I saw you, in the summer, when something I said offended you? That was the night the thing happened which caused me to break forever with the past — and that night I spent here — on this bench."

"Oh! Doris, and I had made it impossible for you to come to me for help. Have you forgiven me?"

"It wasn't your fault."

"But I have something to tell *you* — about what you said then about Miss Davidge. I am not sure — but you may have been right."

They sat for a moment in silence, and then Goeffrey turning toward her, saw that she was looking at him strangely, with a sort of soft blaze in her eyes that thrilled him.

Suddenly she got up saying, "I am rested now." But they had gone but a few steps when she said, "May we go back, Goeffrey?"

Something in her face startled him for a moment. "Are you ill?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "I'm all right, only tired — more than I thought."

When they reached the drive, Goeffrey hailed a cab

and they returned in it. He watched her anxiously on the way. She looked very pale again and fatigued; there were shadows under her eyes and a pinched and whitish look about her nostrils and her mouth. He thought that she had the look of a person who had been insufficiently nourished, and with a pang of self-reproach, he realized that he had only offered her for breakfast what he himself had been accustomed to, a couple of boiled eggs and tea — he was sure now that she needed food. Fortunately he had in his ice-box, a cold chicken which he had bought ready roasted the morning before. He had been keeping it intending to produce it as the *piece de resistance* of their dinner; but as soon as they had reached his rooms, he set the table and brought it in with some salad and a bottle of old Chablis, he happened to have, one of a few he had brought with him from his former quarters. He remembered with delight that she had drunk some of it before and had praised it.

“It isn’t too early, is it?” he asked her. “And see, Doris, I still have some of the Chablis you used to like.”

Goeffrey possessed a hearty appetite and he purposely made more of a display of it than usual, to give countenance to her very apparent hunger. He remembered that the night before she had eaten little owing to her agitation, and how they each attacked the chicken with avidity, neither stopping until its bones were picked clean. By the time they had finished, the early twilight of a winter’s day was beginning to

fall. Goeffrey moved the table and drew their chairs toward the fire.

"But Goeffrey," Doris said, "I mustn't stay here to-night. I must find some place to go."

"Not until to-morrow, Doris," he answered firmly. "Take pity on my loneliness and then in a little while, you know, we are going to have tea."

For the first time she laughed — a laugh of pure happiness.

"Oh, Goeffrey," she said, "not for hours yet. But would you like me to stay?"

"Oh, so much, you can't think what good your being here has done me."

"But, does no one come here?"

"No one. Mr. Bancroft was the first in months — and as for servants, I won't have them. For one reason every one I ever had, except Waters, used to break my china, and for another, I can't afford it, so I am my own housmaid now. And then I like to think that this place is my own and that no one can come here unless I wish it."

They sat on and on, unconscious of the flight of time, talking in commonplaces, or looking in silence at the fire, aware only of an extraordinary felicity in being together, until at last Goeffrey insisted on getting tea.

When he came in after finally putting things to rights for the night, he found that Doris had taken to the sofa again.

"You are not ill?" he asked anxiously.

"No — just a little tired," she answered, "but so much more rested than I have been for a long time."

Goeffrey sat down and lighted a cigarette. She was silent for so long, that he thought that she had gone to sleep, but at last she said:

"Goeffrey?"

"Yes, Doris."

"I have never told you anything about myself. Would you like me to?"

"Why, yes. Don't you remember — I have asked you to more than once, but you never would?"

"I couldn't then," she answered, and after a moment she went on. "Did you know that I could speak Russian? — yes — quite well. We lived in St. Petersburg until I was ten — my father took us there from Constantinople where I was born. My father was English — he was a newspaper correspondent and a very brilliant man. He met my mother, who was French, in Constantinople and married her there. He had been connected with one of the London papers for a long time and of course went where they wished him to go. My mother did not like Constantinople nor St. Petersburg, nor in fact any place except Paris, and as my father liked it too, he had long been anxious to receive the post of Paris correspondent, and at last they gave it to him and we went there to live.

"The newspaper paid my father fifty thousand francs a year and as he made money besides, writing other things, we lived very well.

"Our apartment was in the Faubourg St. Honoré near

the Elysée Palace and of all Paris I have always loved that quarter the best. We lived there for three years and I was very happy, Goeffrey, and then my mother died, and after that my happiness began to leave me. My father gave up our apartment and went to live at an hotel, but in a year he died too, and then I went to London. He was very generous and always spent money freely, and after his death it was found that he had left almost nothing. The people at the hotel and some friends in Paris found, through his paper in London, that his only relative was a sister there, and on her being notified of his death, she came over to Paris to take me back with her. She lived in Chelsea, on an annuity given her by some distant relatives of her husband, who had been dead many years. For three years I lived there, and then she died and I had no one. I was seventeen — I had no money, except a few pounds, and no relatives — and —” she paused for a moment and then she said, “and that’s all.”

“All,” repeated Goeffrey, “there must be much more to tell.”

“Not much that I wouldn’t be glad to forget.”

“Poor little Doris,” he said.

“But Goeffrey — last night and all day to-day, I have had a feeling that I haven’t known since those happy, happy days in Paris. A feeling of security and friendliness and of shelter — and I shall never forget it — never.”

“If I have done that for you,” he answered, “then

I have repaid you a little for what you have done for me in driving away my dullness; and Doris, you must remember now that I am your true friend and that you need never feel alone and friendless again."

"Thank you, Goeffrey."

They sat in silence for a time and then she said:

"Do you remember, Goeffrey, how we used to talk about Italy and France and how we both used to say how much we would like to see them again? Do you still want to?"

"Oh, more than ever — much more — do you?"

"Sometimes with such a longing that is almost unendurable — but it is always to see Paris — I suppose because I was happy there. Sometimes I dream about it and it is always the Paris of the quarter where we lived. How beautiful it was. You would go down the Avenue Marigny a little way and you would be at the Avenue Gabriel — the prettiest of all *I* think, and just across the road was the Champs Elysée and the little guignol theaters — and there close at hand was the Place de le Concord and beyond that the gardens of the Tuileries, and beyond them the Louvre and at one side the bridges and the Seine. How beautiful — how beautiful — and every day when it was pleasant, I used to play there — in the Champs Elysée, and of all the little boys who used to be there I have often thought that one of them might very well have been you. You lived there too, didn't you?"

"When I was studying architecture, for a long time," answered Goeffrey, "and before that many times

for a little while. One spring we lived, when I was a boy, on the Avenue Montaigne — just across the Champs Elysée you know, and I used often to go there.”

There was another silence and then Doris said:

“Goeffrey, do you think that a person could do a wrong thing without being lowered by it?”

“Why, yes,” he answered, “I think they might — it would be quite possible.”

“But if they wanted someone else to value them, and this thing that they had done might lessen the other’s value of them if they knew it; would it be wrong not to tell about it?”

“I’m afraid it would, Doris — because then they might be wronging the other person by concealing it — and after all a wrong is so mainly, if it hurts other people, not so much ourselves. Don’t you think so?”

“Yes, I know it is so — I only wanted to ask. And now I think perhaps I had better go to bed.”

They stood up.

“Good-night, Doris,” said Goeffrey.

“Good-night.”

“Are you happier now?”

“Oh, so much happier, Goeffrey.” And she went into her room and closed the door. Yes, Doris was happy, but happy with an anguish that seemed unsupportable, because she knew that the time must come soon when she would lose it again — that there could be no perhaps!

## CHAPTER XXI

THE night Pandolfi had driven her out of her house — Doris had gone back into the park, found the bench she had shown Goeffrey and had stayed there until morning, holding the stiletto in her hand; partly because she was frightened and partly because she had discovered that she had something with her on which she could borrow money and she did not intend to let anyone take it away from her. This was a very fine Swiss watch with a long gold chain which had belonged to her mother. With the money she could get on it at a pawnbroker's, she hoped to be able to live until she could find something to do by which she could support herself. She had determined to cut loose absolutely and forever, not only from her past life, but from the friends connected with it and she had no others. She slept a little at intervals, but the bench was uncomfortable and each time she woke with a start from a dream in which she thought that a thief was cautiously drawing the watch out of her belt. Even at daybreak, she was afraid to leave her place of concealment and she stayed there until people began to pass frequently and she knew that the city was awake again. She looked at her watch, found that it was seven o'clock, threw the stiletto under the bushes and got up. On leaving the park, she found

that the shops were not open and she walked for many blocks down Sixth Avenue before she succeeded in discovering what she was in search of. The pawnbroker advanced sixty dollars on her watch. She placed the roll of bills in the bosom of her dress, retaining one of small denomination which she thrust into her glove and went to the nearest restaurant for breakfast; for she was very hungry. Seeking afterwards a department shop, she purchased some changes of linen, a cheap valise to put them in and a purse in which to keep her money; found and rented a small room in a lodging house and began to look for work. Many heart breaking hours Doris passed in that month, during the heat of the summer, before she found it. She was without experience of any kind which would be of help to her and the season made it still more difficult. At last one day she passed on Fifth Avenue the shop of a modiste, an Irishwoman with a French name, where she had bought an occasional gown in other days. The shop with its window boxes of flowers, its striped awnings and its small groom in livery, reminded her unpleasantly of the past and she was about to hurry on, when the thought struck her that Madame Cartier might give her something to do—the thought was distasteful to her, but she was desperate and she went in.

Madame Cartier, a large woman in a tight fitting black gown, was sitting in the front of the shop when Doris entered. She greeted her effusively, with a deferential expression which changed quickly to one

of astonishment, as Doris told her her business and came to a decision at once. She was a kindly and good-natured woman, who had been in the habit of taking very strong likes and dislikes to her customers which owing to her vogue she did not always conceal, and she had liked Doris. People would be coming back to town soon she thought and she would have to engage additional salesladies and where would she find one with Doris's manners, good looks and good taste. Doris could hardly keep back her tears when she realized that, for a time at least, the suspense and disappointments of the past month were over. Her wages were not munificent, but she could manage to live on them and she set to work with a determination to make herself indispensable to Madame Cartier and the latter soon had cause to congratulate herself. Doris, with her evident desire to please, her capacity, her tact and her innate skill in such matters, soon made herself invaluable and at the end of two months Madame Cartier, to show her appreciation, increased her salary.

Soon after this, however, when they were standing one day together in the front of the shop, which for the moment was empty, a motor stopped at the curb and Pandolfi emerged from it. He crossed the pavement quickly and came in. Doris never knew how he learned where she was.

"I would like to speak to this lady," he said to Madame Cartier, indicating Doris, and as the former withdrew, he added in a low voice:

"Look here—I want you to come back. Wait a

moment," he added, before she could answer him. "I am sorry for what I did; I promise to control myself in the future."

"No, Ernesto, it is impossible."

"Don't you believe what I say — that I will be able to," he asked, looking at her almost pleadingly with his bold and handsome eyes.

"It isn't that, Ernesto — it's that I've done with the past, I am going to live by my own efforts and honesty."

"But you can't earn your own living. Suppose they shouldn't want you here any longer, what would you do?"

"Find something else."

"Suppose you couldn't, did you find it so easy before you came here?"

"It's no use, Ernesto, I shall not do it."

The old impatient and threatening look began to come into his face.

"I usually get what I want," he said, "and that is final is it?"

"Yes, it is final."

Pandolfi turned and went out and Doris sat down. A sense of physical weakness overcame her for a moment and a feeling of disgust and loathing at the thought of what he had once been to her.

Pandolfi's change toward her was due to two reasons. In the first place Doris's announcement that she had sent Goeffrey his letter, had roused in him a tempest of resentment and fear; fear lest the letter

might reveal things which only he and Davidge knew, and resentment against her for being the possible means of such a revelation. He knew that if the true story of Davidge's failure should be discovered, his career would probably end abruptly in prison, and the sending of the letter had come at a moment when he was engaged in a campaign against a certain stock which if successful, would enable him to leave the street permanently. When this was accomplished, he had planned to go abroad, never to return. Pandolfi had spent many anxious days after Davidge's failure. Geoffrey's letter had come and he had secured it and lost it again inexplicably and this had added to his apprehensions, but the days had passed and he had heard nothing to indicate its discovery. Davidge too seemed to have been able to elude the police completely, and when the excitement following his failure had abated, he had begun to plan his final stroke which would be the last; and the terrific effect of Doris's announcement on him was due to the fact that if the letter contained what he feared, it meant the ruin of all his plans. He saw his carefully erected edifice crumbling about him. Nothing took place to show that the letter had revealed anything and as his apprehensions lessened, regret for his treatment of Doris awoke. In his way, he was fond of her, and after her disappearance he had realized that she had filled a larger place in his lawless and unbridled life than he had dreamed.

His confidence and sense of security had returned

and he wished to find her and get her to return. If he had known that Goeffrey's letter had fallen into the hands of the powerful and formidable Storey, he would have faced the future with less courage.

From that day he began to persecute, to pursue her, to make her position intolerable at Madame Cartier's. He would call repeatedly, telephone messages were sent, notes delivered and a variety of petty annoyances which first made Doris the object of good-natured ridicule which she accepted as best she could, in spite of her humiliation, but which finally ended in indignation at his persistent malice.

Madame Cartier finally said to her, "Something must be done. The man's a fool to try to win a woman by such tricks, why don't you have him arrested? He's demoralizing everything."

"He wants to drive me away from here," Doris answered. "You've been very good to me, but I understand of course that I can't stay if he keeps on annoying you in this way."

"It's a shame," said Madame Cartier, "and he's so masterful. He knows that we don't like his coming here, but he doesn't care what we think about it." And after a moment she added, suddenly, "Why don't you go back to him, my dear?"

Doris blushed crimson—and Madame Cartier noticing it went on. "You're surprised, aren't you? Well, he told me about it the other day."

Doris flushed again, this time with mingled feelings of anger and despair and humiliation. Anger at Pan-

dolfi's action and despair at the thought that she must go away; at the thought that she must face again the task of looking for work. But it was imperative; she must find some other place where she could hide herself and cease to be reminded of the past. Now that Madame Cartier knew, she felt that it was impossible for her to stay.

Although Madame Cartier regretted losing her, she was relieved when she realized what Pandolfi's purpose was, and from what she had seen of him, she believed that he would not be turned aside from it; so Doris found herself again without work and again began the dreary task of looking for it. The story of the weeks that ensued until the night on which she finally sought aid of Goeffrey, was one of failure, disappointments, rebuffs and increasing poverty.

She began to fall behind in the payment for the room she occupied in her lodging house, and on that day she had been forced to leave it, her landlady refusing to let her take the few things she possessed with her — and indeed it would not have mattered. She had no money to pay for another and nothing with which to buy food even, and she had walked the streets that day hungry, until the cold and the storm of the night had driven her to seek help of him. She felt sure that Irma or any of her old friends would have helped her, but she had long before determined to cut loose from them and there was something in her nature invincible and stubborn which would have made her prefer to starve than to yield from her fixed determination.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE city waking under the sharp touch of winter took on another aspect — an aspect, glittering, vivid and active. The air rid of the dusty haze that had hung in it during the hot season, became crystal clear. Life quickened, the blood ran dancing, crowds filled the pavements and suddenly as if by magic, the streets were massed with vehicles. Day by day the thousands which had been driven away from the city by the intolerable heat — intolerable for those who do not have to bear it, returned by train and boat to take up life in it again. The town became sharp, flashing, brilliant and noisy and over it a vivid sky stretched, fleeced with milk white clouds.

Pandolfi, who after losing trace of Doris, had gone abroad for two months, had returned and was hard at work again carefully maturing his plans for the great coup which was to mark the close of his career in the Street. Very quietly for some months he had been buying, through various brokers, the stock which it was necessary to get possession of before opening his campaign and they had had instructions to continue to do so during his absence — but on his return he found that things had not gone as well as he had expected. He had confided his plans to no one. Like an inventor who, fearful of the discovery of his secret, has the various parts of

his machine made by different hands, assembling them himself, Pandolfi had had his brokers working in ignorance of his general plan and of each other's part in it, and yet at times it had seemed to him of late that some secret opposition against him was making itself felt, as if he were being watched and hindered by some hidden opponent who had divined his purpose and had determined to frustrate it. After a time, however, the obstacles which had presented themselves, whether by accident or design, disappeared and he forgot about them.

Storey too had returned to town and it was then that the secret opposition which Pandolfi had thought he had noticed, and which had caused him some misgiving, had disappeared.

Storey's suspicions of Pandolfi's connection with Davidge's failure, had been confirmed by the letter Geoffrey had brought him. In it Davidge with surprising lucidity had explained that Pandolfi had induced him to embark on certain speculations. Davidge had supplied money from time to time and as the apparent difficulties of their position became greater, and still larger sums were needed, he began hypothecating securities which he had no right to use. He admitted that he had not told Pandolfi how he was getting the money he was giving him, until at the end when after a final demand for more, he had appropriated the securities which made up Geoffrey's fortune with Pandolfi's knowledge and approval. Davidge had apparently realized at the last that he had been tricked by Pandolfi and had written Storey with the hope that in Geoffrey's case at least, where Pandolfi

had been a party to a criminal conspiracy, he might be forced to make restitution.

Upon careful consideration, Storey had come to the conclusion that any sort of criminal action against Pandolfi or any suit to recover, would be useless. The statements in Davidge's letter might be easily proved to be those of an unbalanced mind and he felt sure that Pandolfi was too shrewd to leave any traces which might be used as evidence against him. He determined therefore to wait his opportunity and to make use of surer and more powerful weapons. The chance presented itself sooner than he expected. Using the resources of his widespread and powerful interests, he learned that Pandolfi was engaged, through different brokers, in a series of maneuvers, and piecing together the various fragments of information he had received, Pandolfi's whole scheme was soon made clear to him. He saw what stock Pandolfi must have before putting his scheme into execution, and as he did not wish him to act until his trap had been laid for him, he entrusted to one of his subordinates a plan with which to delay Pandolfi until he should be ready for him. Upon Storey's return, finding that his instructions had been carried out to his satisfaction, he quietly waited for the opening of Pandolfi's campaign.

Martel's death had shocked his wife so terribly, that for a time her resentment against him was forgotten. She blamed herself for it, and as an act of expiation she lived for some months at Fernleigh, carrying out his commands precisely as if he had been alive. It was not until six weeks later that she had heard of Richard's

marriage and this too had been a bitter blow to her. It was true that she had left town without letting him know and had not written him, but under the circumstances that could hardly have been expected. But even admitting that he had been piqued, it was hardly possible that he could have arranged a marriage with Mrs. Aladine in so short a time. She did not know then that it had taken place the very night of Martel's death. It seemed to her that he must have been playing a double game, that he had been deceiving her deliberately and she suffered a humiliation so profound that it seemed as if she could not live under it. In the midst of this depression, however, a letter came to her from Richard, written in Paris, a long and passionate letter. He had, he said, taken the step he did to save her. It seemed the only course. Bancroft and Goeffrey had discovered certain things and informed him that they intended opening Martel's eyes. He begged them not to, offered to make any sacrifice, but they were immovable. Finally he had asked for three days' grace which they agreed to. He was desperate. Somehow he must save her. That night he did not sleep but toward the end of it, like a flash, the thought came to him that he must marry Mrs. Aladine. If he could do that he knew that the regard that Bancroft and Goeffrey had for her would make it impossible for them to say one word to Martel. In spite of the fact that he had seen so little of her, certain circumstance had made it plain to him that she was far from indifferent to him. He proposed to her, was accepted and finding her infatuation for him

so great, that he felt that he could do so, he suggested an immediate marriage, giving some plausible reasons which she accepted without question, agreeing to tell no one until it was an accomplished fact. He was forced to do it because if Bancroft got an inkling of it, he would have moved heaven and earth to prevent it.

Richard begged Mrs. Martel not to blame him for the apparent heartlessness of his action. He respected and admired his wife greatly and hoped and prayed that he had not wronged her by practicing such a deception — but his one overmastering idea at that time, was to save Mrs. Martel; he knew that this could be accomplished in no other way and he was ready to make any sacrifice.

But the tragedy of the situation was revealed to him when, after reaching Paris, he read of Martel's death; saw that it had taken place on the very night of his marriage and had he waited even one day, it would have been unnecessary. When he realized this, he wrote, he was in despair, he felt like making away with himself from pure chagrin and savage disappointment — he thought of returning to her but saw at once that that was impossible and finally now that he could safely do so, he was writing to her to explain a thing which she must have of necessity utterly misunderstood and to tell her that he had never changed, never could, that he longed to be with her, and that he had been separated from her by the cruelest fate that ever man suffered under, and that if it should be only for once, only to say good-by, he must see her on his return.

Even Richard, who had learned so well how to play on the credulity of women, wrote certain portions of this tale with some misgiving; but as Mrs. Martel read it a wave of tenderness swept through her; it gave her an opportunity to believe again in the man she loved and she grasped it eagerly. He had sacrificed himself for her. How noble of him. She felt she must not be less so, that she must accept the inevitable and refuse to see him, and she experienced a peculiarly self-satisfying sense of lofty well being as she determined on this renunciation. And this resolve seemed to render her secluded life at Fernleigh unnecessary — as if she had given Martel a promise at last that she knew that she could keep and as the cold weather approached and her existence became more irksome, she too returned to town.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Whitely's great house overlooking the park, was open again. They had arrived at the time Mr. Banfroft had expected and Goeffrey, calling one afternoon, found Constance at home. He immediately laid Doris's case before her and as he had expected, she promised to find a position for her at once. On Goeffrey's telling her that Doris had been at his rooms the night Constance had come there with Nina, Constance said that she remembered her.

"She was very pretty, a blonde. I remember her well," she said. "She didn't seem to belong there exactly."

"She didn't," Goeffrey replied, "she is a lady, born and bred, only she's had hard luck."

“And what about yourself?” Constance asked, “and Nina. I have had no letters from her since I went away, but I hardly expected any — she never writes to anyone,” — and she added after he had told her of the breaking of their engagement, “Poor Goeffrey, and has it made you very unhappy?”

“Awfully — at first — but one gets used to anything, I suppose.”

“One can’t say that she treated you badly, exactly, — and yet she had a little of her own. If she had been really genuine about it she would have been willing to begin on that, I should think, with what you could earn. Do you still love her, Goeffrey? I mean, would you marry her now if you could?”

Goeffrey waited for a moment without answering.

“No,” he said at last. “It’s all over, I think.”

“The people who suffer in this world are the kindly, sincere and unselfish ones, Goeffrey. Such people are too simple, too sincere, ever to unlearn the lesson that if one is honest and does one’s duty, all will be well. Such people wish to be happy and to make others so, but the other kind, the selfish ones, do not need happiness; they want other things, material things and to get them they will be ruthless, trampling on the rights of others in order to obtain them. If Nina is like that, it is lucky for you that it has ended as it has.”

Goeffrey knew that she was thinking of Richard.

Constance was one of those people who have an inherent faith in the possibility of happiness for themselves and others and the realization that her marriage

had not brought it to her — made her disappointment all the keener because of that belief. She felt that, while she had not found it, somewhere it was waiting for her, but that now it was too late. After a moment she said:

“Have you seen Mr. Storey?”

“Only once,” Goeffrey answered. “He has been away, I think — but I may see him almost any day.”

She paused again and said, “When you see him tell him that — that I —” and she stopped — “never mind,” she added, “it is nothing, perhaps I shall see him myself.”

Richard had accepted with calmness the realization that he and his wife were not suited to each other. He had taken his place as her husband with all the ease and luxury which accompanied it with much complacency and a determination never to fail toward her in those graces and accomplishments which could make him so delightful when he chose to use them — but to his surprise Constance seemed not to be satisfied with them, demanded something from him which he could not give her — could not have given any woman and what it was he had only a vague idea — a certain estrangement ensued with the result that he resumed his pleasures a little sooner perhaps than he would otherwise have done — and on his return from abroad, he began at once to lay siege to Mrs. Martel.

It must be admitted that she struggled bravely against him. She felt that if she granted the one interview he had asked for, she was lost and she resisted

until he broke her resistance down. After that she resisted no longer.

And so at length in the shadows of the buildings, in the roar and turmoil of the city — the puppets in our drama, moved like marionettes by the strings of their loves, their ambitions, their hatreds or their hopes, were assembled again. Pandolfi was ready to begin his campaign. Storey, feeling always alone amid his multifarious details, because of Constance's marriage, and yet keeping always a sharp eye turned toward Pandolfi, waiting to trap him when the time should come. Constance alone too with her regrets — Richard renewing his friendship with Mrs. Martel, Mr. Bancroft implacable and untiring already on his track — Doris trying, in the discharge of her new found duties, to live only in the present, and Goeffrey accepting as philosophically as possible the routine which had become necessary.

Last of all Nina had returned and had taken a small apartment with Aunt Mary and close on her heels came Mr. Arthur Vernay. Vernay had decided to marry. His establishment was not quite complete. He must have a wife to lie between those wonderful fine sheets of his with their embroidered monograms. She must be tall, elegant and slender — and as Vernay had too little imagination and too much good sense ever to wish for the unattainable, it was probable that he would get what he wanted.

## CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Goeffrey had told Constance that his love for Nina was over, he had attributed his cure to the alleviating influence of time and he did not realize that his association with Doris had been a more potent factor. She had in reality always appealed to him more strongly, but the social gulf which seemed to separate them had prevented him from ever acknowledging to himself that he could think of wishing to marry her.

Constance had fortunately been able to find a place for her at once, in the executive department of one of her charitable institutions, and Doris had begun her work with her usual capable energy, glad to find herself occupied again after her weeks of poverty and privation.

She had thought at first of moving to the quarter in which her office lay, but at Goeffrey's earnest solicitations — and because it was her secret wish, she stayed on in the room she had engaged, close to where he lived. She had intended too, never to go to see him as she had done before, because now that she had entered into her new life, a life of honesty and self-respect, she wished, as a sign of this change, to take up its conventions — but it was not easy. Goeffrey came for her every night so that they might dine together and they found their companionship so pleasant that it was hard to part

as soon as they had finished. She could not ask him to her room, and the parlor in the house in which she lived and where lodgers were supposed to receive their friends, seemed impossible to them — so, it grew to be their custom to repair to his rooms and to sit there talking and smoking until bed time. They were as much alone in the city, as if they had been in fact living in some isolated place, and at night in the seclusion of Goefrey's sitting-room, with its blazing fire, there was something sweet to them about this isolation which they would have been loathe to change. Only Doris knew that that change must come, and she saw Goeffrey's unconscious love for her develop with feelings of intense happiness, which at night often changed to a bitter despair wetting her pillow with tears. How it would end she did not know except that at last she must either confess to him or go away without one word of explanation. But in the meantime their intercourse was so precious to her, that she could not bear to give it up and she drifted on trying not to think of the end.

At night after coming to Goeffrey's place, their talk turned at last almost invariably to Paris, the place abroad which in common they knew the best. Their solitude and the unaccustomed lives which both were leading, developed in them a feeling that they were living amid alien surroundings and their talk was like that of two exiles longing for their own country. They spoke nearly always in French, recalled the smallest details of their life in Paris, and its glamour, which continually grew on them as they looked at it through the

rosy atmosphere of the past, made it seem to them like their promised land — perfect and beautiful.

A poetic and ideal companionship grew up between them, developing ever into something more tender and powerful. During the day each worked as if in a dream, thinking of the other, the incidents of the night before, and waited eagerly for the hour to come when they could be together again. They had drifted into that mystic land of love full of sweet, poignant and unutterable sensations. Life had been transmuted into an ineffable dream, full of golden flashes, the glow of lights and sounds full of sweetness.

Many months had passed and it was toward the end of winter. One Sunday after a long walk in the park, they had returned to Goeffrey's rooms. The day had been unusually mild and the softness of the air suggested the coming of Spring, the awakening of nature. They had been very silent during their walk, but they were unconscious of it. A mutual preoccupation absorbed them, they seemed to be waiting for something, hardly conscious of what it was, yet wishing for it with hushed breaths, in fear and in longing.

It was nearly dark when Goeffrey unlocked his door. The fire had died down and only a faint glow came from it. In the fading light which came from the window, the room had a hushed and quiet air, somnolent and still. Doris sat down on the sofa before the fire and Goeffrey going to the window stood there looking out. The heavens seemed very high; very high the small white clouds floating slowly across it bathed in the last

light of the sun. How beautiful it was, how beautiful life was as they had been living it, how wonderful. He went to the sofa, sat down beside her and suddenly his arms were around her — they were pressing each other in a passionate, a perfect embrace — their lips met — “I love you, I love you,” he breathed, his heart beating so that he could hardly speak. “I have always, always loved you.” How sweet her kisses were. How wonderfully sweet. He felt tears on her cheeks and kissed them away. “Why do you cry?” “Because I am happy.” “Do you love me?” “With all my heart, all my soul. Oh, Goeffrey, I have loved you always. When I came to see you that first day, it was because I loved you.” “And I you.” “But I never knew — kiss me again and again, I love you — I love you.”

And in the ecstasy of their embraces, they sat there they knew not how long — the fire died out, night came, it grew cold — but they did not notice. Deep in the rhapsody of love they were indifferent to material things, it sufficed them — darkness and cold were as nothing, love warmed and lighted them.

But when they parted at last, Doris wept again, softly to herself, but as if her heart would break, and in the last passionate kiss which she gave him, there was something so despairing, that it seemed as if she were bidding him good-by forever, and Goeffrey tossed on his bed that night, torn between emotions of happiness and strange forebodings.

The next day after interminable hours at the office, he hurried to his rooms to make ready to go to her. As

he came in he saw an envelope addressed to him, lying on his table. No one could have put it there but Doris — she had a key and sometimes would come there to wait for him if he happened to be late. He opened it with a feeling of terror.

“I must not see you again, Goeffrey — I have been trying to be good, but I have been dishonest to you whom I love with all my heart. I am a wicked woman, Goeffrey. I cannot marry you, and when you know, you would not wish me to. I have no right to marry anyone except Ernesto. Does that make it clear to you? You have meant so much to me that I could not bear to give you up until I had to, and now that time has come. I made you love me perhaps, and there I wronged you, but I will not wrong you further, and so good-by. Good-by, dear, dear Goeffrey — I shall always love you. As I write the tears blind me so that I can hardly see. Good-by — I am going away.”

Goeffrey seized his hat and rushed like a madman to Doris's house. She had gone that morning, leaving no address.

How he spent that night he never clearly knew. He had a vague recollection of being in the streets, in his rooms, in the streets again and at last of letting himself in just as day was breaking. If he had not had fixed in his mind an unswerving determination to find her, he would have killed himself.

He did not go to the office that day. After making himself some coffee — he had never thought of dinner the night before — he went to the building in which the

offices of the institution were, in which she was employed, but she had not been there. Suddenly he thought of Constance and rushing uptown, rang her bell, a little after ten. The servant at the door informed him that Mrs. Whitely was not well, but that he would inquire whether she would see him or not and showing Goeffrey into the small parlor, he left him there.

Goeffrey sat down and waited. It was in this room, with its antique paneling, its Dutch paintings, with the old French clock ticking faintly on the mantelpiece, that he had said good-by to Nina on the day that Pandolfi had surprised them with the news of her father's disappearance and it was here too that he had met her again. How little it interested him now, except for a feeling of thankfulness that it had finally ended as it had so that Doris could come into his life. It was here too that Constance had surprised them; Storey, Mr. Bancroft, Nina and himself as they were discussing Richard. How far away it all seemed, how distant and vague compared with the desires and thoughts which absorbed him.

The servant returning, led him upstairs to Constance's sitting-room. She was half lying in a *chaise longue* by a window which overlooked the park. She looked ill to Goeffrey and in answer to his inquiries said that she had taken cold.

"But it is nothing," she said, "I am very strong you know, except in that one way. My chest, they always settle there. Get a chair, Goeffrey, and tell me what you want."

"Oh, Constance," said Goeffrey, "I want Doris. She has gone away—I must find her. Do you know where she is? Have you heard from her?"

"Yes," she answered, "I know where she is and I have seen her." And as Goeffrey with an impetuous movement seemed about to interrupt her, she laid a hand on one of his and said gently, "Wait, until I have finished."

"She came to see me yesterday morning. She said she had written you. Did you understand what she meant when she said that she had no right to marry anyone except Pandolfi?"

"I don't know," Goeffrey answered excitedly. "I suppose so, but I don't care, I want her."

And Constance said again, "Wait."

"She came here and told me everything. She had lived with Pandolfi for a long time as his mistress. No punishment could be too terrible for a man like that, Goeffrey. He deceived her by means of a pretended marriage. She had lived in London without money or friends, trying to support herself, and when he came and offered her what he did, she had about given up the struggle. They lived for nearly a year in London and it was not until business made it necessary for him to come here, that he told her. She tried to kill herself and he promised really to marry her, but failed to keep his promise. What could the poor child do, Goeffrey? She had had a slight experience on the stage and when they came here, he got her an engagement in a minor part, partly to give her something to do and partly to

conceal their real relationship, which she insisted on. She says that from the first time she met you, the hatred which she had for her life became unbearable and yet she admits that she hadn't the courage to face the poverty she had known before. On the night that we came to your rooms and Nina laid her father's letter on the table, Doris saw Pandolfi take it and in turn, when the opportunity presented itself, she took it from him and for all that time until you got it again, it was in her possession. You will remember of course how one night last winter you found her in the street suffering — really suffering from cold and hunger and how you took her in? Do you know how she came to be in that condition? For your sake — I am telling you all this because after you have heard it, you must think well what you wish to do and of the solemn responsibilities involved and as you answer me, I will know how to act.

“Yes, Goeffrey, it was for you that she had come to that. At first, although she knew of course that she had no right to keep it — she did not send you her letter through love and jealousy. She feared from the importance every one seemed to attach to it, that it would play some vital part in re-establishing your fortunes and she felt sure that in that case you would marry Nina. Then too, from some feeling of loyalty to Pandolfi, she hesitated to give it to you and later there was another reason. Pandolfi, who had divined her feelings toward you, threatened to reveal their relations to you and it was then that she told him that the letter was in her possession and that if he breathed

one word to you, she would give it to you. He tried to find it, was brutal to her, but she would not give it to him. One night last summer she came to see you — your business venture had failed and you had just had a note from Nina breaking off your engagement. She could not help telling you what her opinion of Nina was, and I am not sure but that she was right, and you were angry with her and she went away. That night she sent you the letter, determined never to see you again — to give you over as she thought to her rival and to brave Pandolfi's anger — for she had said that when she sent it to you, she would tell him. There was something very fine about that, Goeffrey — culpable as she was in not giving it to you at first, because in doing so she faced poverty, brutality at Pandolfi's hands, and because she felt that she was giving you up forever. Pandolfi turned her out that night, stripped of everything as he thought, which would be of value, but he had overlooked a watch which she wore on a chain around her neck. She pawned that and began to look for work.

“With the exception of a few weeks' employment at a dressmaker's which she was forced to leave because Pandolfi found her there, her life, during that time, was so hard, so dreadful, that as she told me about it, she cried at the recollection of what she had gone through with. She had great courage, but that failed her at last and then she went that night and stood outside your house. If you had not found her, I do not know whether she would have gone up to you or not — she does not know herself.

"That is all. She knew that you were beginning to be very fond of her, but she could not bear not to be with you — and she asked me, in case I should see you and you should speak of her, to tell you how sorry she is and to ask you again and again to forgive her."

"Forgive her? I have nothing to forgive," said Goeffrey. "I love her. I will marry her — she thinks that her life with Pandolfi has shut her out forever from the association of so called decent people. I don't see it. Nina would not deign perhaps to notice a woman like Doris, although Doris is her equal in every way, but would *she* have done for me what Doris did? I tell you that I would be proud to marry her."

"But remember," Constance answered, "there will be many people like Nina who will condemn her — you cannot live as you have been, always. You must be prepared to suffer slights and humiliations."

"I will take her abroad," said Goeffrey, "we would be happy there. We used to talk about it so much."

"But you haven't any money, how could you live?"

"I would earn it somehow. Tell me, Constance, where she is, please! please!"

"No, I will not tell you now. Think it over to-night — I will send her a note to come and see me in the morning. I want to talk with her and if you will come in the afternoon, I will tell you then what I have decided."

"It can't be that you would decide not to let me see her, Constance — you wouldn't be so hard."

"It is for her, Goeffrey, think well about it — you must realize the responsibility of the course you want

to take, in justice to her. She is pure gold — she has suffered enough — and Goeffrey, if you should marry her, you must never fail her.”

“I will never rest until I find her.”

Constance gave one of her rare and beautiful smiles and held out her hand. “Come to-morrow,” she said.

As he reached the foot of the stairs he saw Mr. Bancroft in the hall giving his card to the servant. “Tell Mrs. Whitely that it is most important,” he was saying, and as he saw Goeffrey, he beckoned him into the little parlor to wait the servant’s return. There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes and closing the door, he said almost in a whisper:

“I’m going to tell you this because I trust you. I’ve got your precious cousin at last where I want him. I knew that if I gave him rope enough, he’d hang himself. Do you know he hasn’t been here for three days — and went without a word of explanation? But I know where he was. He has forgotten me apparently and fears nothing. Constance is too proud of course to spy on him, but when she knows what I have to tell her, she will act.”

“She isn’t very well,” said Goeffrey.

“Of course she isn’t well, nor ever will be until she tears that scoundrel out of her heart and rids herself of him. Have you seen her?” he added.

“Just now,” Goeffrey answered, “she has a bad cold.”

“She’s always having them — she’s run down — but I’ll save her.” He kept pacing up and down. “What

I don't understand is about Storey. He loves her — why doesn't he do something."

"He hasn't been asked to do anything, besides what could he do?"

"*I could do something,*" the old man answered, "and I've done it," and the servant coming in at that moment to say that Mrs. Whitely would see him, he fairly ran out of the room.

Goeffrey spent the day in walking the streets. It would have been impossible for him to have gone back to work. He kept a constant watch, hoping that he might see Doris. He went again to her office only to learn that a note had come from Mrs. Whitely, saying that Miss Adair would not return there for the present at least. His desire and impatience were so intense, that it seemed to him that he could not possibly live through the time that must pass before he could see Constance again. The realization of what Doris had done for him, and more especially the courage with which she had fought to support herself after leaving Pandolfi, touched him so keenly that it was like a physical pain — any thought of blame for her life with Pandolfi or any prejudice which it might have aroused in him, were swept clean away by her devotion. She had builded better than she knew, because in her act of renunciation, she had rehabilitated herself; in fact put the idea of the necessity for rehabilitation out of the question.

Goeffrey went home at last about the hour that they had come there together the day before. Under the fading light of day, the room had the same somnolent

look, through the closed window came faintly the roar of the city. It was here that he, but a few hours before, had held her in his arms. He sat down on the sofa and covered his face with his hands. "Oh, God! give her to me," he prayed.

His restlessness was so great that he went out again, but there was a sense of loneliness so strong in the rush and turmoil of the streets without her, without knowing where to place her in his thoughts, that he returned again. He seemed nearer to her there. They had spent so many hours there that something of her brave and sincere spirit pervaded the room and gave him courage. Late in the evening he went out again, dined hurriedly and came back to sit by his fire to think of her, always of her. He became absorbed, did not move but sat hour by hour looking into the fire. Finally he got up and with mechanical movements, like a somnambulist, undressed himself, got into bed and slept immediately — the sleep of exhaustion.

But Goeffrey did not see Constance the following day. That night her illness took suddenly a serious turn and she could see no one. Going there with the conviction that she would surely tell him where Doris was to be found, and that before the day was over he would see her again, he received the news in consternation, called repeatedly to ask about her and haunted the streets in the hope that Constance had been able to send for Doris and that he might intercept her in case she should call.

He waited until long after dark and then went home to another night of almost unbearable suspense.

## CHAPTER XXIV

PANDOLFI was half Italian and half American. His father, who was a Neapolitan, had married while attached to the Italian Embassy at Washington, the only daughter of a western manufacturer of considerable wealth who had died soon after. The elder Pandolfi, seeing no reason for retaining his position after his wife had come into her money, promptly resigned and, until his death, they had led a roving existence — appearing suddenly in New York, in Paris or in Rome and as suddenly disappearing again. One could always count, however, on finding them at Monte Carlo during the season and at the other resorts which were running on the continent at that time, because gambling was an insatiable passion with the elder Pandolfi and in the gratification of it, he made such inroads on his wife's property, that when he died, her income was barely enough to support herself and her son who at that time was eighteen.

Ernesto immediately took up the reins of government which the head of the family had relinquished, and proceeded to rule his mother with a rod of iron, as his father had done before him. There was not the least doubt in his mind as to what their future plans must be. He announced at once, they were in Rome at the time, that they were going to New York.

"But we can live so much more cheaply over here, Ernesto," his mother remonstrated.

Ernesto, a big handsome boy, looked at her half contemptuously with his large, bold eyes and answered:

"Don't argue mother — I am going to Wall Street to make my fortune — after I have made it you may live wherever you like."

On their arrival in New York, he secured, through some friendly influence, a position in the office of a large brokerage firm, started at once to master the tricks of his trade and on the death of his mother, eight years later, took the small capital she left him and embarked on his career.

Whether Pandolfi owed his peculiar business capacity to his western grandfather, to his father's passion for gambling, modified by other things, whether he had inherited from a forgotten Genoese or Florentine ancestor, some of the old Italian genius for finance, or whether it was a combination of all three influences — in ten years he was already known as a successful speculator — daring but unscrupulous. But the mere occupation of making money would never have contented him, as it does so many men. He wanted it and worked hard to get it so that he might have the means to gratify other tastes. He had a hankering for the flesh pots and for a roving and cosmopolitan life, bred in him by his early associations, but he wished for an income large enough to satisfy his luxurious tastes and habits, without stint.

The brilliant inauguration of Pandolfi's campaign

in Middle States was long remembered in Wall Street. Everything had gone swimmingly for him — the short interests caught unawares, were in a condition of panic-stricken despair, and the price of Middle States' stock was each day mounting higher and higher, when one afternoon he received a message from Storey that the latter would like to see him at once. He was at first inclined to ignore this summons, the street was in a condition bordering on frenzy, messages were coming to him constantly and he did not wish to leave for one moment the work in hand, but people had a way of obeying Storey and so putting on his hat, he went hurriedly to the office of the gigantic institution of which the banker was the head.

Storey's bank occupied an old-fashioned building, standing between two enormous modern structures. It had stood there for three generations with its simple and rather ugly façade, indifferent to the changes, the demolitions, the incessant rebuilding going on around it, and in this indifference it seemed to typify the stability, the strength, the power of its owner. As if amid the feverish life of the street, amid all the records of fortunes made and lost, the growth and decay of great enterprises, amid the surging of the horde, the conflicts, the defeats, disasters, victories and blasted hopes, it stood for a permanent thing, solid and indestructible.

Pandolfi, after a moment's wait, was shown into Storey's private office on the second floor. It was a large room with two high windows looking on the street through which came without cessation the muffled roar

of the city, a long sustained, never ending roar, made up of multitudinous sounds, the noise of hoofs, of the roll of wheels, of the rush of trains, of shouts, of cries, the rattling impact of riveting machines on iron and the surging of the horde. There was no hint of the connoisseur in this room, with its ugly old-fashioned woodwork, its bare walls, its heavy, leather-covered furniture, except that above the fireplace in which there was a blaze of soft coal, a large portrait of a lady had been placed, a Van Dyke. To Storey it had always seemed that this lady looked like Constance, so he had hung it there.

The attendant who ushered Pandolfi into the room, withdrew, closing the door after him. Storey was sitting before a desk which stood between one of the windows and the fireplace. He was writing. On seeing Pandolfi, he motioned him to a chair standing at the end of his desk and handing him a letter he said:

"Excuse me, I will be finished in a moment — and in the meantime you might be reading this — it may interest you."

Pandolfi knew at a glance that it must be the letter which Doris had posted to Goeffrey, and he read it very carefully, very slowly, so that he would remember each word of it. When he looked up Storey had finished his writing.

"Well," said Storey at last, "what do you think of that letter?"

"Most interesting," Pandolfi replied lightly. "Interesting because it is a farrago of insane nonsense written

by a crazy man. Beyond that it means nothing. I would like a copy of it, though. Have you one?"

"I have no copy of it," Storey answered, glancing at him keenly for an instant, "but I can have one made for you. But what interested me in it was, that he makes a serious accusation against you."

"Davidge was a lunatic and you know it."

"We do not know that. Certain facts about Davidge's life which have become known since his disappearance, have led people to suppose so although no one knows for certain, but even admitting it, lunatics have lucid moments sometimes and I should call that letter a very lucid one."

"Really, Mr. Storey, I have not time for a discussion of this sort this morning of all mornings, I am overwhelmed with business," and Pandolfi half rose from his chair.

"Sit down," said Storey so suddenly, in that harsh and powerful voice of his, that Pandolfi obeyed him instantly. "Davidge charges you with having received money from him with which to carry on your speculations; money which he dishonestly raised — he does not charge you with specific knowledge as to whose property he was appropriating, except in one case, that of Geoffrey Hunter. He had kept *his* securities intact, but at the end he not only told you to whom they belonged, but gave them into your hands. I believe what Davidge writes and I sent for you to bring the matter to your attention and to ask you what you intend to do about it, now that the facts in the case are known."

"Do about it?" returned Pandolfi with a sneering laugh, "absolutely nothing at all."

"Do you deny the truth of his assertions?"

"I deny or affirm nothing — I fear you so little that you may think what you please. Admit even for the sake of argument, that I am guilty — you know that there is not one iota of evidence against me."

"There is that letter."

"Do you call that evidence?"

"Very good evidence."

"Is that all you have?"

"Yes, and all I need."

Pandolfi with a quick movement, sprang to the fire, tore the letter across four times and threw the pieces in on the blazing coals.

"Good-by to your evidence," he sneered, "and good-by to you, sir. I have wasted too much time here already."

Storey's eyes had flashed for a moment at Pandolfi's action, but as the latter turned to him, he saw only a burly and bulky form sitting immovable, with eyes which pierced him with their cold and hostile glance.

"You will wait one moment more, please," said Storey, and drawing the telephone toward him he called, "Tell Mr. Coverly that I would like to see him." Almost at once a young man with a keen energetic face entered. He was one of the junior partners.

"Mr. Coverly," said Storey, "have you followed my instructions?"

"Yes, sir," the junior partner answered.

"Then give directions at once to sell Middle States."

A chill ran down Pandolfi's spine when he heard those words. The explanation of that secret opposition which months before he thought he had detected, was made plain to him. Storey had been buying too — had guessed his plans and had prepared a trap for him. He knew that if Storey threw his stock on the market, both would lose, but he knew too that Storey knew that he would not allow this, because while the loss would be large; to Storey it would mean nothing, but to him it would mean ruin. His uncontrollable anger blazed up for a moment, but he had no woman to deal with now and he mastered it. He must make the best terms possible.

"Wait," he said hoarsely, "what am I to do, what do you want?"

Storey made a sign and the junior partner, who was just leaving the room, came back and closed the door.

Storey replied with one word. "Restitution."

"What do you mean — am I to make good to the creditors of Davidge's bank the money he stole from it?"

"You know that that is not what I want — I want the value of Hunter's securities."

"How much?"

"Six hundred thousand dollars."

"I can't do it — you may as well ruin me at once."

"Very well," said Storey and turning, he made another sign to the junior partner.

"Wait," interrupted Pandolfi again, "I will give you three hundred thousand."

"No."

"Four hundred thousand."

"No."

"Four hundred and fifty."

"No."

"You are ruining me," cried Pandolfi savagely. "This is robbery — blackmail — I will not stand it."

"I am not ruining you," said Storey contemptuously, "you will have enough," and then his manner changing suddenly he added harshly, "you will pay six hundred thousand, not one penny less — but decide."

"Very well," said Pandolfi sullenly. "When do you want it?"

"Now."

"I cannot give it to you now — it is impossible — to-morrow."

Storey looked at his watch. "I leave here in twenty minutes to keep an appointment — if you do not deliver to me within that time in money or securities, the sum I have named, I shall break off all dealings with you, but I will break your Middle States market too."

Pandolfi, with a smothered oath, took up his hat to leave the room.

"Where are you going?" asked Storey.

"To my safety deposit box."

"Very well — remember that you have twenty minutes and no more?"

"Was it wise to let him go, sir?" asked the junior

partner, who had been an interested spectator of this scene.

"He will come back," answered Storey, "he is simply paying six hundred thousand for the privilege of making much more. I would like you to deposit the securities which he will bring, to Goeffrey Hunter's credit and to write him to call at my house to-morrow at nine."

Ten minutes had passed when an attendant who always stood in the passage outside Storey's door, knocked and entered with a perplexed and dubious air.

"What is it, Brooks?"

"A man to see you, sir."

"What is his name?"

Brooks, still with an air of perplexity, went quickly to Storey's desk and bending forward he said in a low voice:

"He wouldn't give me his name, sir, but I think — I think it is Mr. Davidge."

"Mr. Davidge!" exclaimed Storey in amazement, "but how can it be possible — the police are on the watch for him — he is known everywhere."

"But he is so changed, sir, hardly anyone would know him. He has a beard now and is much thinner, but I am sure it is Mr. Davidge, sir."

"Did no one recognize him in the office?"

"He came up by your private stairs, sir."

Pandolfi might return at any moment and the business in hand must not be interrupted.

"Take him into my small office," said Storey quickly,

indicating a door which opened from the room in which he was sitting — “but by way of the passage — don’t let him come through here — and tell him that I will see him in ten minutes. Get him in there at once.”

“Davidge of all men,” he said to himself, as Brooks hurried out of the room. Here was a situation which he wished himself well out of. Davidge, a man he had known for years, although he had respected him but little, a fugitive from justice, had by presenting himself there, thrown himself on Storey’s mercy. He went quickly to the door and looked out. The passage was empty. How lucky that he had come at that very moment. According to Davidge’s own statement, Pandolfi had had a guilty knowledge of his speculations only where Goeffrey’s fortune was concerned, but if they had come face to face, the latter would have realized at once that with Davidge under arrest, ready no doubt to tell what he knew, the restitution of it would not save him and he would have refused to restore one penny of it. He had hardly reached his desk again when Pandolfi entered.

“That is all, I think,” Storey said, after examining the securities to ascertain if they were of a satisfactory nature and reached the necessary total.

“Not quite all,” answered Pandolfi, anger getting the better of him, “it may flatter your conceit to assume the powers of a czar, but let me tell you that I have friends as powerful as you are and you will suffer for this, if I can make you.”

The door to Storey’s inner office was close behind

him and at that instant he heard the knob turn and knew that it had been opened — he saw too an expression of amazement, of horror, of rage and of profound chagrin cross Pandolfi's face and as he turned, Davidge was standing beside him, his features distorted with an expression of maniacal hatred.

“Suffer!” he cried in a high shrill voice, “suffer! You have made too many people suffer already.”

He raised his arm and at that moment Brooks sprang through the doorway, but before he could seize him, an explosion sounded deafeningly in the room and Pandolfi fell — half rose — fell again — shuddered for a moment and then lay still.

## CHAPTER XXV

EVEN murder could not keep Storey from his engagements, and on the arrival of the police, he left at once to keep an appointment uptown. It was a meeting which proved to be a long and stormy one, and on coming out from it, he felt, because of it, and because of that tragic scene which he had so lately witnessed, an unusual thing for him, overwrought. He dismissed his motor and determined to walk home, the distance was not great, hoping that the exercise and the fresh air, would dispel the nervous tension which oppressed him.

It was six o'clock and as always at that hour, the streets were swarming with people. He walked heavily as if with an effort, and the din and confusion of the city struck on his nerves with an intolerable insistence. He wanted to get away. What did his power mean? His wealth, which so many envied, nothing but responsibilities, ever and ever accumulating, ever piling up on his already overburdened shoulders. What would he not give to throw them off, to be rid of them forever, to get far away from the struggles, the conflicts, the hatreds of men.

As he was preparing to cross Fifth Avenue near his house, a motor passed quickly close to him and in the instant that was given him, he saw Mrs. Martel and

Richard in it. A blaze of resentment flashed up in him and he raised his stick involuntarily as if in his anger he would smash its window to atoms, but it had passed in an instant and by the time he had crossed the avenue, he saw it turn down the street in which stood Martel's house.

And this, he thought to himself, was the end of Constance's romance, already her husband had taken up his old liason. He felt no anger toward her — never had — but he was sorry for her to the bottom of his heart and his love for her, which he had tried to put away, welled up again in an ever growing flood, mingled with anger and resentment against the man who could regard her so lightly. He was dining out that night and through the whole evening he felt that same depression, that sense of some impending evil which had oppressed him when Martel had come to his end, and finding that he could not rid himself of it, he had left early, reaching his house a little after ten.

"Mr. Bancroft has telephoned you several times, sir," a servant said as he came in, "and told me to ask you to call him up at once, he gave me the telephone number," and he handed Storey a slip of paper on which it was written. Storey looked at it and remembered at once that it was Constance's number. What could it mean? He hurried to his library and took down the receiver. In a moment Mr. Bancroft himself answered:

"Storey," he said, he spoke with much agitation and his voice trembled, "Constance is ill, seriously ill with pneumonia."

Storey felt his heart contract suddenly. "Her husband has been away for several days, I happened to know where and I got by long distance the house he had been stopping in, but they told me there that he had left last night. Since he got back from abroad, he has taken the apartment he had before he was married and often sleeps there, but he is not there now. She asks for him constantly and his disappearance is having a bad effect on her — she has asked for you too — could you come at once?"

"I will come immediately," Storey answered — "and it may be that I can find her husband, I saw him to-day and I think I know where he is."

"Thank God — if you only can," came Mr. Bancroft's voice. "Will you be long?"

"An hour, perhaps less."

Storey went downstairs again. "Telephone for the motor at once and send it to Mrs. Martel's house. I shall be there," he said to the footman and hurried out.

He was in a condition of almost uncontrollable fury. He rang sharply at Mrs. Martel's door and on its being opened, pushed quickly into the hall. A number of trunks, hat boxes and hand bags were piled up in it.

"Is Mrs. Martel going away?" he asked.

"She sails for Europe early in the morning," the servant answered him.

The sound of a piano being played by deft and accomplished hands, came from the drawing-room overhead.

"What name shall I give, sir," asked the servant, who evidently did not know him.

"It is not necessary," answered Storey, and he ascended the stairs.

Richard was seated at the piano and Mrs. Martel was leaning over him. He was playing without notes and was looking up into her face. They were talking together in low tones under cover of the music. Mrs. Martel was facing Storey, and as she saw him her expression changed so quickly that Richard noticed it and turned too. The music stopped with an abrupt discord and he got up suddenly with a queer scared expression. There was something in Storey's face which terrified both of them. He went up to Richard and in an abandonment of rage seized him in his powerful grip and shook him until his brain reeled.

"You cur," he hissed, "you contemptible, cowardly scoundrel. Do you know that your wife is ill, dying perhaps, asking for you and you are here dishonoring her with this strumpet?"

"I — I knew," said Richard, "I was going there at once."

"You liar! you have not been there for days, but you are going now?" He did not release his grip of Richard and started toward the stairs. As he reached the door he turned to Mrs. Martel who, pale and frightened, had sunk into a chair.

"They tell me you are sailing for Europe to-morrow. Let me advise you not to come back. I have certain papers given me by your husband, among them one writ-

ten by yourself in my presence — if you value your peace of mind, stay there.”

His motor car was just drawing up to the curb as he went out and thrusting Richard unceremoniously into it, he gave the number of Constance’s house. They rode there in silence. Mr. Bancroft, who was watching for them from one of the windows of the library, saw the car turn the corner and met them in the hall as they entered. He cast a hostile look at Richard but gave no further sign of recognition and was about to speak when the footman opened the great entrance doors again and a tall thin man with an iron gray beard came quickly in. It was the physician. On seeing Storey, he bowed with exaggerated politeness to all three, and came up to them.

“I hope I see you well, sir,” he said to Storey, rubbing his hands briskly together, and beginning to take off his overcoat.

“How is Mrs. Whitely?” Storey asked.

“Her condition is serious, I am sorry to say, very serious,” the physician answered. “I saw her two hours ago. If you will wait I will report to you again,” and turning he disappeared into the elevator.

Mr. Bancroft came up to Storey and said in a low trembling voice, “I want to speak to you alone.”

Storey pointed to the little parlor which opened off the great hall and motioned to Richard to go into it.

“If she dies,” Mr. Bancroft went on, looking pitifully at Storey, “it is I who have killed her.” His agitation was extreme and he pressed a shaking hand repeatedly across his forehead.

“ You know that I have always hated that man,” making a gesture toward the room into which Richard had disappeared. “ I knew from the first, as we all did, the fatal mistake she was making and knowing how false, how unmindful he would be of his responsibilities toward her, I made up my mind to watch him, to find out something against him and then to open her eyes. She told me abroad that it would kill her if she were brought face to face with the knowledge that he did not love her — I mean had deceived her in any way, but I disregarded what she had said because I thought that if I could show her unmistakably that he was not worthy of her, that she would rid herself of him and everything would be as it was before. But we don’t understand women like Constance, Mr. Storey, they are too far above us, their sensibilities are too delicate for us to grasp and how we wound them, how we make them suffer. I believe that she had no longer, down in her heart, any trust of him, but she wanted to believe, she did not want to be disillusioned because to one as fine as she is, it would be too horrible, too degrading to be brought into contact with such knowledge — it would stain her beautiful and pure soul too indelibly.

“ Well, I found out what I wanted to know and yesterday I came here blind to everything except my detestation of him, and like a blundering fool, like a brute, without warning, I told her. Without mercy in my exultation at being able to disgrace him, I poured out to her all that I had discovered. Oh, Mr. Storey, to the day of my death I shall never forget its effect on her.

She was ill already and it was as if I were physically striking her repeatedly with all my strength, blow after blow. She whom I have always loved so tenderly — selfish and brutal fool that I was. I thought it was the only way."

The old man's despair was pitiful. He wrung his hands as he talked and out of his dry old eyes, two tears came and rested in the furrows of his cheeks. They walked up and down together; no words came to them, and that peculiar hush which pervades a house of sickness, hung about them, depressing and somber.

"This was yesterday — when I had finished I was frightened at what I had done, but even then was glad too, because while I realized that I had taken heroic measures, I felt that in the end I would be doing her a service. She was very gentle, said that she was too ill to talk and then asked me to go — but her voice was so low that I could scarcely hear her — I had taken her strength away completely and I left her in a condition of deep exhaustion. Even I, after I had gone, began slowly to realize that I had done her a grave injury, and last night I called here to find that her illness had taken a serious turn. This morning she was a little better and, they told me, asked repeatedly for her husband; why, God only knows — and for you. I have all day been searching for him but I could find no trace of him. This afternoon I telephoned to your office but they said you would not be back. Later I tried again to find him and when I returned and called up your house, you

had gone out and I have been waiting ever since for you, not knowing what to do."

Storey, his own heart wrung with fear and sorrow, comforted him as best he could. There seemed something ominous in the physician's long absence. They became silent, waiting for his return. Storey looked at his watch — it was half past one. What was happening in that room where Constance lay. Could it be that she was dying? She who was so fitted for happiness, for the joy of life, whose very air seemed unconsciously to plead for gentleness as if she were saying, "We must be kind to one another — love one another, be gentle and forgiving — then life can be very sweet." Could it be that death had come for her? It seemed as if he could not sit there in idleness, as if he must go to where she lay, to make sure that all was being done that should be. He thought of sending for other doctors, one seemed as nothing where Constance's life, perhaps, was at stake — as if he could not do enough, as if where her life was concerned, the importance was so enormously greater and more vital, that one man should not undertake the responsibility of fighting for it unaided. And yet in spite of all his fears, in spite of the knowledge that people die, all people, and that Constance too one day must pass through that narrow door, he could not believe that the time had come so soon. Something in him prevented him from realizing it — the world would change too much, he could not conceive what life would be like if she were gone. True he had not seen her, she had been away, she had become an-

other's, but those conditions might pass if only she would live. Then he would surely see her again and always in his heart so deeply rooted there, that it could never leave him, dwelt the undying hope that at the end he would win her for himself — and Storey, a man who never prayed, prayed that night to a long forgotten God, to let her live.

The door leading to the elevator slid back and the physician stepped out into the hall. Storey and Mr. Bancroft rose to meet him as he came toward them, dreading to hear what he might have to tell them.

"I have thought it best," he said at once, "to call in some of my colleagues. She is desperately ill and yet I do not —"

"Is there any hope?" interrupted Mr. Bancroft, forced in spite of himself to ask a question to which he feared the answer.

"Hope?" replied the physician. "Yes, there is hope, but it is a treacherous disease and one can never tell what turn it will take — her heart is not responding as well as I had hoped. I think she has had some nervous shock. I think I may even say that there is no *immediate* danger. Her husband is here, is he not?" he added.

"He is here," answered Storey. "Does she wish to see him?"

"It would not be best now, besides she is barely conscious, but she is in a highly nervous condition and at the right moment his presence might calm her," the doctor replied. "He should be within call, however.

I will see if I can reach my colleagues," and he went into the closet at one side of the great doors which contained the telephone.

"I was fortunate in finding both of them at home," he said on returning, "and they will be here in an hour."

Storey drew him aside. "Doctor," he said, "Mrs. Whitely has many old and devoted friends — if you can save her life — they will not be ungrateful. I will not be ungrateful — do you understand what that means?" He looked at the physician with his proud and penetrating glance. "It means remuneration such as no man in your profession ever had before. Will you try to earn it?"

"I cannot do more or less than I am doing, sir," the physician replied, but Storey saw that his eye gleamed at the thought of the reward offered him. "Rest assured that I shall do everything that it is possible to do, and now will you let me make a suggestion? You look worn out yourself — am I not right?"

"Yes," answered Storey, becoming conscious all at once of extreme physical exhaustion, "I have had a hard day."

"Then let me suggest that you get some rest yourself, I can see that you need it. There is no immediate danger, leave the battlefield to us, we will do all that is humanly possible and in the morning I may have better news for you. Good-night, sir, I must go to my patient again."

Storey went into the room where Richard was wait-

ing. He found him sitting listlessly before the fire in the gloom of the unlighted room.

"Your wife may ask for you at any moment — be ready — and remember if it is possible, counteract in some way the impression Mr. Bancroft made on her by his charges against you. You are an adept at that sort of thing, no doubt."

"Shall I drop you at your house?" he said to Mr. Bancroft as he came out.

"I shall walk, thanks," Mr. Bancroft replied and Richard heard the door clang after them.

"God help me," he kept repeating to himself, "God help me — what am I to do?" Why was it that life should always be made so difficult for him. He had meant no harm — he had tried always to treat his wife with kindness, with consideration. Was it his fault if she had been disappointed in him? If she seemed to expect things of him which she would not explain, seemed to demand something the nature of which he could not understand? Could he have known that Mrs. Martel was to be set free the very night of his marriage — was there no excuse for him — why had he been made the victim of such a cruel trick of fortune? And then this discovery of his renewed relations with her — why was it that he always had to pay for the smallest transgression? Other men who were uncongenially married, sought with impunity, consolation elsewhere — why should he be made to suffer for it when others went scot free? He had sacrificed himself to save Mrs. Martel's honor — he had come almost to believe this himself — would many men have done that — and what credit did

he get for it? Indeed he could tell no one, honor sealed his lips and even if it were known, people would be too cynical to believe in the honesty of his motive. A bell rang in a distant part of the house, and a servant came to the door. He heard voices in the hall. Someone said to the servant:

“Tell Dr. Beeckman that Dr. Swayne and Dr. Berger are here, please.”

He heard them talking in low voices until the servant returning asked them into the elevator and the door closed on them.

Storey had told him that if his wife asked for him, he must in some way re-establish himself in her confidence — but he knew that that was impossible — how could he explain anything to a woman as ill as she was? It was ridiculous, not only ridiculous but cruel and heartless, to him and to her as well. It would be useless for him to see her now. It would be much more sensible to wait. When she was better he was certain that he could convince her of his innocence and he would swear, swear to himself now, that he would be true to her — accept the inevitable and give her not the slightest cause for dissatisfaction in the future. He had made his bed and he would lie in it. But why all this commotion, this extreme concern. He had heard most of the conversation between Storey, Mr. Bancroft and the doctor, and the latter had said that there was no immediate danger. What purpose could it possibly serve to attempt an explanation with her now.

The fire flaring up for a moment, revealed the room to him with its antique paneling, its Dutch pictures,

its old French clock ticking loudly in the intense silence of the house.

It was in this room that Mr. Bancroft had told him her history and under the fascination of the evidence of her immense wealth, he had first tried his powers on her and had noticed her almost immediate response. He was afraid that he must admit that in the feeling of triumph that swept through him, he had forgotten Mrs. Martel, in fact he had neglected her for a time, more than had been prudent. But it could never have been for long. Constance was unsympathetic, was cold, but *she* how wonderful, how perfect she was and he lapsed into a reverie in which he reviewed the secret journey they had made to Fernleigh and from which they had just returned and the supreme and ecstatic perfection of their visit there. A visit so perfect that they had decided they could not live away from each other and had determined to throw convention to the winds and to go away together. That afternoon they had secured passage on a steamer sailing early the next morning and if Storey had not come to Mrs. Martel's, he would have been at his apartment now making ready for the journey.

His abstraction had been so deep, that he had not noticed the opening of the elevator door, but now he heard voices just outside of the room in which he sat. It was the doctors taking their leave. Dr. Beeckman had come down with them. No servant was there apparently and they spoke so that he could hear every word distinctly.

"You agree that I have done everything possible," Dr. Beeckman was saying.

"Everything," one of the others answered, "she will not live through the night. There is some profound depression there. She does not show the least response to the stimulants. It is hopeless, I am afraid. Do you agree with me, doctor?" the voice added, apparently addressing the third consultant.

"Quite," answered another voice, one with a distinct German accent, "you are right; she will not live till morning."

The door shut again and he heard footsteps going down the hall and up the stairs. A feeling of panic seized him. She was dying — what could he do? He hated death — could not bear to be in the atmosphere that surrounded it. He thought with terror of the days which would follow. The tears, the condolences, the part he would have to play in it; the depressing and terrible rites he would of necessity have to go through with. He feared all this, but most of all he feared Storey; he had a mortal terror of him. In this very room, Bancroft had said solemnly, "God help the man who harms one hair of her head if Storey is alive." He was afraid — he could not bear the thought of facing him. He looked at his watch, it was three o'clock — the steamer sailed at six. There was still time. He picked up his hat and overcoat, put them on; then very cautiously opening the great door, closed it softly after him and passed out quickly into the darkness of the street.

## CHAPTER XXVI

GOEFFREY found in his box the second morning after he had seen Constance, the letter which the junior partner had written him according to Storey's instructions and reached the latter's house at nine. Storey's car was waiting, and he was just coming out as Goeffrey ascended the steps. He looked tired and worn and he carried his great bulk in a way Goeffrey had never seen before, as if it were too heavy for him.

"If you hadn't been prompt, you would have missed me," he explained. "I am going to Mrs. Whitely's. Did you know that she was ill?" and on Goeffrey's replying in the affirmative and asking about her, he said:

"She is slightly better this morning they tell me. Can you go up with me? Very well then, get in and I will talk to you on our way.

"In the first place," he began as the motor turned into Fifth Avenue, "about your friend the Jew. It is a pity, don't you think so, to let him beat you?"

"Yes," Goeffrey answered, "but when I dislike a person as I do him, I can't bear to see him even. It seems worth a lot not to have to."

"That's all very well, my boy, but to be beaten, think of it, and by a man like that? And do you know that he made a mistake in selling to you at the price he did?"

"In what way?" Goeffrey asked.

"He sold it too cheaply as it has turned out. I have been looking into the matter a little and I have been told that in that part of town property is advancing in value very rapidly and is already worth a good deal more than when you bought it. That is one reason why he wants to get it back again. Have the contractors' suits against you been tried yet?"

"Not yet, but they come up very soon, I believe."

"Yes," repeated Storey contemplatively, "it's a pity. If you could carry it through, it would be, as it turns out, a very successful speculation."

"It does seem a pity," Goeffrey answered, "to start a thing like that and then have to let it go — yes, I would like to finish my building, but I had to stop because I hadn't any money. I haven't any more now than then."

"How about your inheritance?" asked Storey.

"My inheritance?" Goeffrey repeated in a puzzled way. His despair at Doris's disappearance had made him forget everything. He looked at Storey and saw that a smile rested on his care-worn features.

"Yes, my boy, I've got it back for you," he said, and he laid a hand affectionately on Goeffrey's knee.

"My money," gasped Goeffrey. "You've got it? But how was it possible?"

"I made the man who stole it, return it, that's all."

"But it's wonderful," Goeffrey cried. Tears came into his eyes. In an instant the whole world had changed for him. Under the stimulus of this good news,

he no longer felt any doubt about finding Doris. His discouragement vanished. He could take her abroad now, lift her out of the sordid trials and worries of her past life completely — it was wonderful. He seized Storey's hand and thanked him in such a heartfelt broken way, that again the latter smiled.

"How did you do it," Goeffrey asked. "I can't understand it, who took it — was it —?"

Storey knew what he was about to ask. "Yes, it was Pandolfi," he answered, "you have seen the papers this morning, I suppose?"

"Yes," Goeffrey replied, "how tragic, how terrible — was he there about my money when Mr. Davidge shot him?"

"Yes, and if Davidge had arrived fifteen minutes earlier, I doubt if you would ever have seen your money, my boy." And he explained how he had recovered it. Goeffrey thanked him again. "It is too wonderful," he said, "I can't realize it. I could never, never tell you how much I owe you.

"And Mr. Davidge," he added after a moment, "how awful this will be for Nina. He will be tried for murder, I suppose."

"He is mad they say — incurably so. He will never be tried. He has been here for all these months under the very noses of the police living in an East Side boarding house under an assumed name. He had many real grievances against Pandolfi and some fancied ones and he believed that Pandolfi was employing detectives to find his hiding place. The publicity Pandolfi had

gained in the papers lately through his speculations in Middle States stock, had also excited him and aroused his resentment and he had gone downtown for the purpose of killing him. Not wishing to go to Pandolfi's office unless he was sure of finding him there, he telephoned and was told that he had left a short time before to see me. He came then directly to my office arriving between Pandolfi's first and second visits to it."

"And was Mr. Davidge's ruin due to Pandolfi?"

"Unquestionably — some of the money was lost in speculations in which they were jointly interested, but I am sure that Pandolfi simply appropriated a great deal of it — it's believed that he has left a very large estate. I don't know whether the creditors of Davidge's bank will ever get any of it — and there is one curious thing about it which may complicate things. It appears that Pandolfi was married."

"Married," cried Goeffrey.

"Married," repeated Storey, "and if anything were needed to prove how thorough a scoundrel Pandolfi was, his treatment of his wife would show it conclusively. In Davidge's letter to me — the one sent to you — and which Pandolfi burned in my office, Davidge, while writing mainly to ask me to help you, went pretty thoroughly into Pandolfi's past as much as he knew of it — and among other things was the story of his marriage. Pandolfi told him of it himself. A few years ago, not many, Pandolfi, while spending some months in London, met a young girl there who was on the stage. She was very beautiful and Pandolfi became infatuated with her.

But she was honest and finding that he could get her in no other way, he married her. They lived in seclusion there for some months and then came here. Whether Pandolfi had in his mind from the first the plan which he ultimately carried out, no one can tell, but on their arrival in New York, he told her that the ceremony had been a pretended one. It had not been irregular in any way, but the circumstances under which it had been performed had been just unusual enough to enable him to convince her — and she was very young you see.”

“Oh! Oh!” cried Goeffrey — so many emotions were surging up in him that he was gasping for breath. He seized Storey’s wrist and gripped it so convulsively, that the latter looked at him in amazement.

“Oh, the brute, the unspeakable, unspeakable brute. And yet thank God for what you have told me. Mr. Storey is there any way that this can be kept from the public, I mean the fact that Pandolfi succeeded in convincing her that they weren’t really married?”

“I think there is small danger of that,” Storey answered. “The only ones who knew the whole story so far as we can tell, Pandolfi and Davidge, are both most effectually out of the way. Pandolfi and his wife might very well have had a reason for concealing their marriage and after all it was no one’s affair but their own. However, if the papers should get hold of it I have some influence with them. But you must finish your building,” he added. “Don’t forget about that.”

Goeffrey full of his thoughts did not answer at first. He was thinking of how much this wonderful news would

mean to Doris. How far it would go toward healing the wounds which her supposedly equivocal past had dealt her. Presently he said:

"I had thought that I might go abroad."

"Go if you want to. Get a trustworthy man to take charge of it for you. Do you know of anyone?"

"There's Stackpool," answered Goeffrey. "He would be glad to."

"Then do it by all means. Pay the Jew and the contractors and put him to work at once. Will you?"

"Oh! yes," replied Goeffrey, "I will; and thank you again and again for all that you have done for me and for what you have told me. It has made such a tremendous, such an absolute difference in my life, that you can have no idea how much I owe you."

Storey looked at him quizzically. "Shall I tell you what I think?" he said.

"Yes, please," answered Goeffrey.

"I think that you have been looking for the superlative woman we were talking about one day, and that you have found her."

The motor stopped before the great house that Aladine had built and they rang the bell. The day was gloomy with gray clouds hanging low but it was not cold. Mr. Bancroft, who was waiting for Storey in the hall, opened the door himself. Storey knew in one glance at his face that something disastrous had taken place — such consternation, dismay and despair were depicted in it. He led them quickly into the little parlor.

"Whitely," he said, "he is gone."

"Gone!" cried Storey, his face darkening.

"I got here," Mr. Bancroft continued, speaking with difficulty, his agitation was so great, "just after you had telephoned. The doctor was much encouraged. The nervous complications which had caused him so much concern, had disappeared somewhat and the inflammation had made no further progress. It seemed she had an even chance. Just after I came, she asked for her husband and the doctor told her that he would send for him at once. No one had seen him since the night before, but it was supposed that he had gone to his bedroom and was asleep. A servant was sent to tell him and getting no answer to his knock, he opened the door. The room was empty — no one had been there, the bed had not been slept in. At first it seemed inexplicable to us. We searched the house from top to bottom.

"In the meantime Constance was waiting for him, we made excuses, said that he was dressing — it was frightful. At last, a maid who sleeps in one of the basement rooms and who had gotten up during the night to open her window, said that she had seen him pass hurriedly and turn down Fifth Avenue. She thought at the time that he might have gone out on some errand made necessary by Constance's illness, but she remembers looking to see what time it was. It was three o'clock."

"And Constance?" asked Storey.

Mr. Bancroft spread his hands with a gesture of hopeless resignation.

"What could we say and besides she *knew* — knew that he had failed her as he was bound to do, but she

began to fail alarmingly. The scales were evenly balanced before and that one thing has made them sink the other way. No one knew why she asked to see him. She may still have had faith in him and wished to be reassured. But that does not matter. She knows now that at the vital moment he has failed her, and whether she believed in him or despised him, it was all that was needed."

"Couldn't we find him," suggested Goeffrey, "perhaps —"

"You will not find him," interrupted Storey. It was all clear to him now, and he swore to himself a bitter oath that Richard should be punished, punished to the uttermost.

The door opened and the physician came in. At the expression of gravity on his face they got up. He went to Storey with a look of apology and said:

"I'm sorry, sir, I have done all that I could. She asked for you a moment ago. But I doubt if she will know you. Will you come?"

Storey went out with that heavy tread which Goeffrey had noticed before and together he and the physician mounted the stairs and went into the great apartment where Constance lay. The physician closed the door and with distinctive discretion, went to the far end of the room.

Until that moment, Storey had not, in fact could not realize that Constance was dying — but as he entered it, he knew that in that room there was a presence unseen, yet awful — that stern and implacable master who

conquers all things. The inanimate objects there seemed aware of it, the draperies hung in dejected folds, the furniture stood listlessly about. In the grate, the fire burned furtively as if afraid. From the gloomy sky, a somber and even light filled the room.

Storey stood for a moment before he could bring himself to look where she lay. He gently drew a chair up beside the bed and sat down in it so that he was close to her. Her eyes were closed and he could not tell whether she breathed or not. She was not changed much. There were faint shadows under her eyes and her pallor was unusual, but that look of delicate fatigue which he had noticed more than once and which for some reason had always filled him with dread, rested on her face very deeply now. But to him she would always be the same — always beautiful, elegant, distinguished, with something fragile about her which never failed to move him. And as he had not fully realized that death was there, so too he had not completely understood until that moment, what it meant to him — the void she would leave — and suddenly brought face to face with it, it overpowered him. He could not bear it, it was too much. He knew for the first time, the part, present or absent, she played in his life. How she filled it. How absorbed he was in her and at the thought of the wounds, the pain, the loneliness he must suffer — he was afraid.

“Let me go too,” he cried to himself, “my burdens are too heavy.”

And so he had come to say good-by. He could be of no more service to her. For how many years he had

watched her, tried to guide her, helped her through the difficult places, and now she must fare forth alone on that dark and mysterious journey — pass by herself into the beyond, into the valley of the shadow and he must stay. A terrible revolt sprang up in him which he knew that he must conquer but which left an anguish almost insupportable. He felt about him, that relentless presence. She must go, and alone, and he was there only to say good-by — and reaching out he took her hands in his and kissing them he said, to himself, very gently, almost with confusion, “Good-by, Constance.”

A sigh lifted her bosom and her eyes opened. To that soul preparing for its flight, many things had been made plain. She looked at him, her lips moved slightly. He thought that she tried to smile but could not; but in her eyes there was a look which Storey never forgot, which he treasured always. A look which, at this moment of parting, told him that she comprehended all, that she understood at last the value of what he had offered her, that the happiness she had searched for, had been close beside her always, and she had not known. A look which was an avowal, a confession, a regret, a prayer for forgiveness. Storey had won her for himself at last. She sighed again — her eyes closed — the hands which held hers slipped away from her. She was gone.

But not alone. Do not fear for her, faithful friend, for on high where her spirit flies, the Prince of Compassion waits for her, with his ineffable smile.

## CHAPTER XXVII

AN hour later Goeffrey left Constance's house. The clouds were breaking, great spaces of blue infinitude showed between them and floods of sunshine pouring at intervals through these spaces, gilded the city. He crossed Fifth Avenue and entering the park, turned south. An enormous loneliness oppressed him, his old feeling of isolation, intensified a hundred fold. Not only had he not found Doris, but Constance, his true, his sincere friend, was gone forever. He was sure that she had meant to tell him. But now he was at a complete loss to know what to do. That old longing for the love and sympathy of woman came back to him. He wanted Doris so that he could lay his head upon her tender bosom and be comforted.

And in the midst of his thoughts of her, his loneliness, his longing for her, something wonderful happened. He saw her — she was walking not twenty steps in front of him. He ran toward her crying: "Doris, Doris," and as he came up to her, he saw tears in her eyes. "Do you know?" he asked and they stood silent for a moment in the presence of that sorrow which oppressed them. But not for long. They were young and youth is jealous of its own — sunshine was flooding the trees about them and overhead rose the blue infinitude of the sky, and yet Goeffrey saw something in her expression

— a reminder of the old days — something hopeless and sullen — which would have daunted him had he not known that what he had to tell her would banish it forever. He led her to a bench.

“Oh,” he said. “I have found you, Doris, and never, never will I let you go again. How could you, Doris, when I loved you so much? And, Doris, I’ve got my money again — and it was through you that I got it — and there will be no more worries, no more troubles now. We will go abroad together. Oh, my love, how wonderful it is to be with you again and you will stay with me now? Tell me that you will — that you will never leave me.”

She looked straight in front of her without answering and Goeffrey saw that her breast was rising spasmodically.

“What is it, dear,” he asked, “you will not leave me now?”

“I must, Goeffrey.” She caught her breath with a sob and he saw how she was fighting to keep herself under control so that she might tell him what she felt she must. “Listen,” she went on, “Goeffrey, I can’t — I can’t sacrifice you simply because I love you — that isn’t all there is of it — and yet it is all, too. It is simply that I love you so much that I can’t marry you. I would rather put away my own chance of happiness a thousand times than wrong you — and I *would* be wronging you. Oh! Goeffrey, don’t make it hard for me. It’s hard enough already — let me go. You will thank me some day.”

Suddenly she covered her face with her hands — to hide the tears which she could not keep back. Goeffrey bent close to her.

“Doris,” he said, “you would not be wronging me. Your marriage with Pandolfi was not a fraudulent one, not pretense — it was real — you were married to him from the beginning. You were his wife — never anything else.”

She took down her hands and he saw an expression of awe, of wonder on her face. She looked again straight ahead, but she was transfigured, as if the portents of the future so hopeless, so bitter, which she had faced so courageously, had vanished, had been replaced by a vision of un hoped for, undreamed of, incomparable promise.

“In Davidge’s letter which you sent me,” Goeffrey went on, “he told about it. *He* knew. Pandolfi had told him.”

She was still silent and Goeffrey watching her expression, saw a shadow rest on her face.

“Ah! but Goeffrey, *I* didn’t know — I — I —”

She looked at him appealingly as if asking to be reassured.

“Oh, my dearest,” he interrupted. “You said that you would not marry me because you would be wronging me — now you will not be. You are surely not thinking of sacrificing yourself further; if you must, do it in such a way that it will make me happy — then something at least will be gained.”

For the first time she smiled.

"Oh, Goeffrey, how good you are to me, how kind," she put a hand on his.

"Then be kind to me. Is it all right, dear?"

"Listen, Goeffrey," she answered, "I must speak of the past just once, then let us forget it forever. You know everything now — in spite of it, are you certain that you can trust me, that never one shadow of doubt will come to you, that you will always unalterably believe in me? Look at me and tell me."

And Goeffrey, looking straight into her eyes with his candid and generous glance, answered:

"Always, there is no one so true, so brave, so honest. Is it all right?"

"Yes, dear," she answered, and that soft blaze came into her eyes, "it's all right."

Goeffrey fell to kissing her hands.

"Don't, dear," she said softly, "people are looking."

"I want them to look," he cried. "I want them to know. I want the whole world to know that you are mine."













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